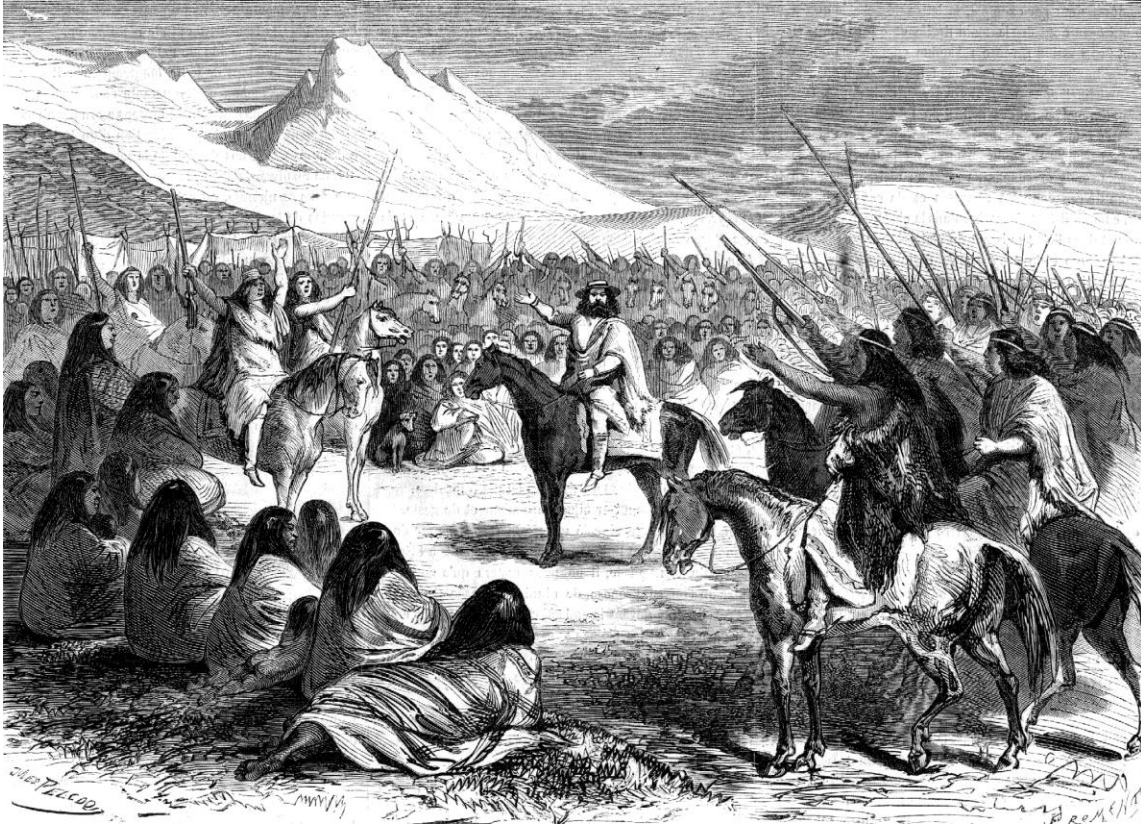


The Araucana

by Don Alonso de Ercilla y Zuñiga



Translated by David Russell

La Araucana

This is a 16th Century epic poem, in Spanish, describing the conflict between the Spanish and the Araucanian Indians in Chile (now better known as the Mapuche). It was, in its time, a best-seller, on a par with Don Quixote. It gained the respect of, among others, Voltaire. It was the first major treatment of Native Americans in a European language, and could be described as the first major work of Latin American literature. Alonso de Ercilla, the author, served with the Spanish army in the campaign, and, under the most adverse conditions, kept a diary of the events.

The author, Alonso de Ercilla, served in the Spanish army and was directly involved in the conflict. He kept a diary during his service, and was probably the first ever war correspondent. To quote the author's preface:

"The time I took to write this book was stolen from war, and *to the end that it should be exact and truthful I wrote it in the midst of the actions and in the places it described*, often, for lack of paper, upon scraps of hide or fragments of letters, of which some were so small that they scarce had room for half a dozen of lines, so that to fit them together cost me no little labour; because of which, and of its small pretensions, as a work poorly swaddled, though fostered with care and the best intention, I hope the reader will bear with its manifest defects."

The struggle is described in graphic detail, unflinchingly depicting the horrors of war. So strong and truthful is this description that the Araucana is in some ways an anti-war poem; it de-glorifies and de-mystifies war. There is a feeling of modernity about this 16th Century text. The conflict has such affinities to Iraq and Afghanistan. In contrast to the walkover in Peru, it was grisly and protracted, largely a stalemate with massive slaughter in its path.

It is also remarkable for portraying in depth both sides of the conflict, and giving sympathetic coverage to the Araucanian side. The Indians are treated as courageous worthy adversaries. although Ercilla was a Spanish monarchist, the whole tone of the work is remarkably un-racist.

"... If any should think I show myself herein partial to the Araucanians, in that I extol them than their barbarous condition warrants, nevertheless if we consider their up-bringing, their customs, and their arms and manner of warfare, we shall find that few nations excel them, or have so boldly and steadfastly defended their country against such redoubtable enemies as are the Spaniards. And truly, it is a matter for admiration that these Araucanians, *who do not possess more than twenty leagues of land, without a work of masonry, nor a fortified stronghold, nor store of defensive armament* (since the long wars with the Spaniards have wasted and consumed what they had), with small advantage from the ground, having on their borders 3 Spanish settlements, and two forts of ours planted in their very midst, should by sheer courage and stubborn resolution have redeemed and maintained their freedom, with such slaughter of their people and ours that it can be said that few parts of the country are not soaked with blood and strewn with bones, the dead never wanting for successors to sustain their cause, seeing that their sons, by natural courage and eagerness to defend their fathers, abridge the years, and taking arms before their time affront the hardships of war; and that further, such is the dearth of warriors by reason of the slaughter in these battles, that to replenish the ranks and swell the squadrons – even the women arm themselves, and fighting

by the side of the men, meet death with unflinching resolution. *All this I have desired to set out as proof and testimony of the indomitable spirit and temper of this nation, that is worthy of greater praise than I can give in my verses.*”

Later freedom movements in Latin America, including followers of Allende, could look to the case of the Araucanians as inspiration. As regards Native American resistance to white colonisers, they put up the most sustained show – for 300 years, only to be finally subdued by the armies of Argentina and Chile equipped with up-to-date fire power (late 19th Century). The methods of Lautaro, the Araucanian leader, are studied to this day as examples of guerrilla warfare.

Main Characters

The Spaniards

Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga – the author, courtier of King Philip II, volunteer with the Spanish army in its expedition to quell the Araucanian rebellion;

Diego de Almagro - had collaborated with Francisco Pizarro in the conquest of Peru, and was persuaded by the latter to make an expedition to Chile. His efforts were largely a failure, because of inadequate provisions, the rigours of the winter and ferocious resistance from the Promauces. On his return to Peru, he attempted to usurp power, was tried and executed. (Pizarro was subsequently assassinated by partisans of Almagro.

Pedro de Valdivia commissioned to conquer Chile. He avoided some of Almagro's mistakes, and founded some settlements, some of which were later destroyed. He was appointed governor of Chile after the overthrow of Pizarro. Met his death at the hands of the Indians when he was defeated and taken prisoner at the battle of Tucapel in December 1553.

Francisco de Aguirre - close confident of Valdivia - injured in the defence of Santiago in 1541.

García Hurtado de Mendoza - Marquis of Cañete later general, later to be indicted for fraudulent practises.

Francisco de Villagra - three times governor of Chile. Defeated the Indians at the battle of Mataquito

The Araucanians

Lautaro – When young, he was captured by the Spanish colonizers, and became the personal servant of Don Pedro de Valdivia. Lautaro learned the military ways and skills of the Spaniards' army by observing Valdivia and his peers. It was he who first introduced Native Americans to horses. He won many victories against the Spanish. But his plan to expel them from Chile were thwarted by the Araucanian tradition of a drinking bout after a victory. He was finally defeated, taken prisoner and executed at the battle of Mataquito, by the forces of Francisco de Villagra.

Caupolicán – a Toqui (chief) with exceptional powers of endurance. With the death of Lautaro in 1553, was made commander-in-chief in his stead. Caupolicán was an Araucanian chief and a leader of the Indian resistance to the Spanish invaders of Chile. From 1553 to 1558 he sustained the struggle against the Spanish, ultimately taking sole command of the Indian resistance. After several victories, Caupolicán suffered three disastrous routs at the hands of forces led by Don García Hurtado de Mendoza, losing more than 6,000 men in one of the defeats. In 1558 Caupolicán was finally taken prisoner by the Spaniards, and barbarously murdered. After his death, Caupolicán the younger became another prominent leader of the Araucanians.

Tucapel was a region of Araucanía named after the Tucapel River, it now lies within the Arauco Province, of the Biobío Region of Chile.

The name of the region derived from the *rehue* and *aillarehue* of the Moluche people of the area between the Lebu and the Lleulleu Rivers, who were famed for their long resistance to the Spanish in the Arauco War. Tucapel is also the name of a famous leader from that region in the first organised resistance to the Spanish

Lincoyan – After the death of the first Araucanian Toqui, Caillavilu, who fought against the Spaniards, Lincoyan took the command of the army in 1550. He was of gigantic stature, and renowned for his great courage. In 1551 he attacked General Valdivia on the banks of the Andalien, but the neighbouring fort resisted his assaults. Later that year and in 1552 he continued fighting against Valdivia along Cauten river, and took part in the capture of the fortresses of Arauco and Tucapel. Soon after this battle he defeated a strong Spanish force that came to protect Imperial. He followed Caupolicán in all his battles till that chief's death in 1558. Afterward he continued to fight the Spaniards till he was killed in the battle of Canete (1560), in which many of the Araucanian leaders lost their lives.

Colocolo – made a famous speech to rally the Araucanians. This was reproduced in the epic, and celebrated by Voltaire.

Galvarino – Chieftain taken prisoner by the Spaniards, who cut his hands off.

Leucoton – had the distinction of capturing Spanish artillery.

Peteguelen – younger Toqui

Pran – tried to infiltrate a Spanish fortress, posing as a deserter

Reinoso – involved (unsuccessfully) in battles with Caupolicán the younger.

Millalauco – leader with a sense of Realpolitik, who undertook diplomacy with the Spaniards, as a means of gaining intelligence about the Spanish dispositions.

Guacolda – lover of Lautaro

Tegualda – Lady of noble birth, whose husband was killed in battle, and had a brief meeting with Ercilla.

Part I

Canto I

(This is an account of the province of Chile and the state of Arauco, showing the customs and military practises of the natives; it describes the arrival of the Spanish, and the conquests they achieved until the Araucanians began to rebel.)

I speak not of ladies, nor love; neither the tenderness of enamoured knights, nor the softnesses of caring lovers. Rather do I speak of valour, of the heroic deeds of those struggling Spaniards who, with the sword, placed their yoke around the neck of untamed Arauco. What I am to recount tells of a people who obeyed no king, and who pursued memorable enterprises – rightly meriting celebration. Such rare and laudable deeds enhance the Spanish – for the conqueror is no more highly esteemed than are the deeds for which the conquered are renowned.

* * *

Great Philip, I beg you to read this work, and hope that you receive it well. It is my duty to write this in recognition of the many favours you bestowed on me, and awaits your approval. It is an account without corruption or airbrushing: it was extrapolated from the facts, chiselled out of their very core. Please do not belittle the gift (though it be poor), which lends authority to my stanzas. I wish to dedicate it to such an exalted personage as your Majesty, in order that fortitude may sustain it, choosing the *octavo real* verse form in order to make it visible, tangible – real. And as it had to be crossed out, erased, revised, it remains – to put it mildly, confused. Bearing that in mind, I thought that as the work is dedicated to yourself, then many things hidden must be revealed, many obscurities clarified.

I proclaim that my speaking in your name – and your approval of my work – will lend delicacy to my clumsy style, and artistry to that which seems chaotic.

And so, animated by many things, my pen is delivered to the fury of Mars. Lend me your ears, Sir, to what I have to say; I was an eyewitness to a great part of it.

* * *

Chile, a fertile province, is marked in its famous Southern region by remote nations, respected for their strength and principles; the people rooted in this area are so fine, so proud, elegant and warlike that they have never been ruled by a king, nor subjected to a foreign power.

Northern Chile is of great length; it is called the coast of the new sea of the south. From East to West it is narrow, 100 miles at its broadest, and at 27 degrees from the South Pole, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans mix their waters in a narrow channel. And those two seas which clamour to join, passing along it, beat the rocks and spread out their waves, preventing numerous islands from joining together. At this point the land is split; here the waters can communicate. Magellan, Sir, was the first to open this path, which was then given his name. Whether through lack of pilots, or from hidden causes, however important and unknown, this secret path, so recently discovered, remains largely hidden from us. It was as if a rock of great size had been torn from some islet by the tempestuous sea and the furious winds which, blowing into the south of the channel, sealed it off. As I said, this land runs from north to south, and is bathed by the western (Pacific) ocean. On the eastern side there is a mountain range which sustains the same direction for a thousand leagues.

In the midst of this is the point of conflict; this is the war zone, where Venus and love have no share: here furious Mars holds total sway. In this district, demarcated by the manifestations of its grandeur, around the 36th parallel, dwell the people who held off the foreigners so bravely: these are the Araucanians – that proud, untamed people who occupy such a narrow stretch of Chile, and who, through their sheer warlike prowess, make all the land tremble with terror.

This is Arauco – its fame, credit and pride make it renowned from pole to pole. They put the Spanish in a real predicament, as my story will soon show. Its crucial landmarks are contained within twenty square leagues. This proud state is governed by 16 chieftains and lords – in the study of warfare the finest born of barbarian mothers – restorers and defenders of their country. Nobody is preferred before these 16 in government: There are other chieftains, but these are the pre-eminent ones. Only the lord has the right to the personal services of his vassals; on each occasion that they meet, the vassals can be forced to pay their tribute. But the lords sustain their obligations in matters of military strategy with such experience behind them, with such kudos and discipline that they are true masters of the art of war.

When training to develop skills and proper strength, their boys go running along set paths, over rough and rocky slopes. By covering up their tracks, they give their adversaries some worries; their lungs become so liberated that they can run as fast as the deer. From boyhood they are initiated in the study of war, which they practice on reaching mature years. Those who show any sign of weakness are disqualified from military service, but whoever distinguishes himself in arms is given a rank corresponding to his courage.

The burdens of war and pre-eminence are not borne by weakness, nor by quality, nor through the inheritances of the well-born; virtue and excellence in arms has made these men the preferred ones. Such recognition demonstrates, enables and perfects, puts the stamp of quality upon a man's courage. Those who are dedicated to the pursuit of war are not constrained to work in other areas (these tasks are reserved for the subordinates); but they are obliged, by

law, always to be prepared to fight, and know how to handle their weapons dexterously in pitched battles and wars.

The weapons most commonly used are pikes, halberds and lances, with extra, reinforced points – fashioned like bodkins, axes, hammers, barbed maces, darts, arrows and sticks, lassoes made of strong osiers or lianas, hurling shots and catapults. They took some of their armoury from the recently-arrived Christians, who every hour taught and proved their usefulness for the state, and invented others of their own (as they moved with the times).

Necessity is the great inventor, and struggling for these great causes demands, and produces, masters of prodigious invention.

Some wear strong, double-thickness corselets, and armour – common to all their soldiers, others wear smocks and tunics which, although modern, are widely used; they have armbands, gorgets, ruffs – fitted in different styles, and shields of hard, tanned hide which not even fine steel can penetrate.

Each soldier has to specialize in one weapon; it is with this, most naturally, that he shows himself proficient from youth. He makes a single-minded effort to master his chosen weapon, but playing with a pike does not distract him from being an archer, any more than a pikeman is distracted by handling a mace or arrows.

They make their encampments, and present themselves as distinct, complete squadrons; each detachment has more than 100 soldiers, with archers placed between the pikemen. The archers are out of order if they go too far; they must stay under the protection of the pikemen, who advance as a tight body until they take the measure of the enemy's pikes.

If the first squadron to launch an attack is destroyed in combat another goes so quickly to its aid that there is almost no time to notice the loss; if one column disengages, another steps in. When the first column re-forms, it cannot move from its position until the group following it to the beleaguered unit is identified.

To counter the threat of cavalry, they set traps in swamps; if they are successful, they can destroy their enemy, and throw the horses into the swamp. They can go on repeating this process, making successive attacks while keeping calm and collected. These ruses are highly obstructive to our movements.

Advance guards precede the main barbarian squadrons: these are men of excellence, so proud as to defy heaven and earth, eager to excel in courage, brandishing their pikes, assuming defiant postures, and saying "If any Christian has the guts, let him come forward for hand-to-hand combat."

There are 20-30 such in each company, avid for glory. They march with great gallantry and pride to the sound of beating drums, proficient in arms, identified by various splendid colours, adorned with tufts and crests jumping here and there on all sides.

Once they know their rewards they will do doughty deeds; when occupying an area for a last stand, then the tighter and narrower it is, the more they will give themselves to its defence – parrying each action against them by raising the alarm, retrieving in time the strong position, which in its form and creation followed their plan. Having signalled the place they build their structure, with sturdy trees worked into fortifications in the form of a broad square, reinforced by formidable stakes, which impede fire, entry and combat. Protected within such walls, a small company can easily defend itself against far greater numbers. They strengthen their fortresses further by using thick planks, and placing, at intervals, tree trunks through which each wall is fixed with four fortified strongpoints, each one supervised by a chieftain. The walls are perforated with small, thick portholes – some wide, some narrow – to sustain long-distance observation – free from fear. They are highly effective against any headstrong youth who drives his horse into the ranks of the cunning barbarians; they put him in a perilous spot. The Araucanians are also expert at digging large pits, with sharp stakes in the ground, covered with reeds, grass and flowers, in order to impale their foes unawares. There the blundering runners, with only the sky to protect them, end up in the pits and are buried among the sharp stakes.

They have ways of debate and agreement dating from ancient times, which include sending out an invitation to a drinking bout whenever a memorable victory has been won: each person who hears news of such a success rapidly sends messengers to all the chieftains and lords. Making known what is on offer requires time to assemble, since it all impinges on them, so it is good to communicate with brevity, according to the case, sing its praises and spread the gifts which follow from it, reaching everybody, and ensuring that no-one able to come will be absent.

When assembled, the chiefs (of the Senate) consider the case anew; when they have examined it, and weighed up its pros and cons, they formulate a suitable policy. Once this has been agreed and ratified, anyone who disagrees with the decision cannot be exempted from it, for everyone has to follow the will of the majority.

When there is no further disagreement, a new order is made, to be declared to the common people, saying that some new ideas are to be expected when it comes to preparing for battle. After much ado, they proclaim loudly with drums and trumpets, to bring it to the attention of the whole people, forming squares and putting banners on them so that everyone can see. There are three days to ratify the agreement in its full definition. For that short time, all aspects and problems can be freely discussed. But once that period has passed, it is impossible to revoke the law. As with an inexorable occurrence, they assemble to decide on the new course of action.

The Council meets on a gracious site – a beautiful field decked and garnished with a seeming infinity of flowers. There the trees sway, rustling, caressed by a bold and amorous wind, crossing the field many times – a limpid, restful stream. There is a high, imposing boulevard, both round and square – constructed with order and great skill, capable of accommodating a great meeting and a great feast. The structure invites one to relax, and bars the sun from the entrance during the fretting heat of the day; there one hears the sweet melody and harmony of birdsong.

They are a people without God-given laws, with no respect for any power derived from heaven. But paradoxically their heaven, like a great and powerful prophet, is always celebrated in their songs: they invoke its fury with a sacred mushroom, which is named at all their meetings, having so much to say, with self-assurance, about success, prosperity or a bad future.

If they want to do battle they partake of the sacred mushroom in their ceremony; if this does not respond well, they go with the scythe as their appetites insist (increase their dosage?). No serious meeting takes place without this sacred thing being invoked. They call it *Eponamon*, and it is common for them to give this name to anyone who has courage. They use the false offices of sorcerers, being naturally inclined to the science of sorcery, admiring signs and auguries, by which their affairs are determined; they venerate those portentous signs which indicate the course of future events. The omens heighten their courage and suppress any fear or cowardice.

These esteemed priests maintain themselves only through piety, and by maintaining an austere, abstinent lifestyle. These are the ones who, with eloquence, upbraid coarse commoners for their errors, just like the Holy Scriptures do for us. Those who sustain this strict order have no law, no gods; nor have they sinned. They only live to take advantage of their reputations as wise men. But others are better versed in the sword, the lance, the bow and arrow, saying that the omen, bright or sad, has strength and spirit.

Finally, the destiny and climate of this land, if its stars and predictions are to be believed, is one of struggle, fury, discord and war, and it is only to that the people should aspire. All the land's good and evil is circumscribed by strife. These are men easily aroused to sudden anger, impatient and ferocious in temperament, keen to subdue foreigners.

They are expansive in gesture, clean-shaven; their bodies are well-formed and they grow to a great height, firm limbs and well-developed backs, agile, physically confident, enthusiastic, animated, courageous, industrious, and able to withstand great extremities of heat, cold and hunger.

There never was a king who could impose subjection on this proud, free people, nor could any foreign nation impose its boundaries on them, nor any neighbouring country dare to move, or raise the sword against them; they were always shunned, feared, free from laws and ever headstrong.

* * *

That powerful leader the Inca, holding sway in the southern regions, was a gentleman highly adept at discovering and conquering new nations. To obtain information about this State, he dispatched spies to Chile – the reputation of these people made the Incas' temples bleed and their souls burn.

The intrepid Incas subjugated the sparsely populated wastelands, and forced some of its people into servitude. They imposed their rules with a hard, armoured hand, imposing huge subsidies and tributes whenever any of the rules were broken. Having established control of the land through a powerful army, they moved their squadrons forward, under the Emperor's command: but they had not travelled many miles when they were faced by a level of courage akin to what they themselves had shown when putting the Araucanians under the power of their swords.

The Promauces of Maule were as well-ordered as they were vigorous. They sallied forth against the Incas, and prevailed against them. In hand-to-hand combat, countless Peruvians died, losing the field and all their standards. The Promauces Indians are a people 5,000 strong, prosperous and fearless – which they have well proved to the Spanish. Great is the distinction of that proud nation in terms of military courage and excellence. Knowing the power concentrated in that untamed province, the Incas, having gained so little by force of arms, cut short the war they had begun. Seeing the error of their intentions, they abandoned the territory they had conquered, and left its peoples to their own devices.

* * *

Then Don Diego de Almagro, Adelantado, who had made a thousand conquests elsewhere, and was consequently known as vigorous and brave, generous and keen, came to Chile determined to spread the Faith of Christ. But when he came to the end of this road, he was forced to turn back in his tracks.

With good reason, the victory shortly to be described fell to Valdivia. His memory deserves to be celebrated, since his sword procured so much. In Arauca he achieved glory unsurpassed by anyone after him: the proud people were put under the heavy yoke, and their liberty reduced to oppression. Equipped only with his sword and his cloak, helped by his great diligence, he made a big, bright company of good people; with a good plan and a

valiant soul he took the right path for Chile, which meant either his finding the way out of the impasses or giving his life in the attempt. On this long and bitter road there was to be seen hunger, thirst and cold to an extreme degree. But with suitable constancy they put the intrepid hearts to work, starting out of the path of their right and proper destiny, though hindered by many encumbrances raised by arms through the damage they wrought.

From the start they had pitched battles and perilous encounters with these people, at different times and places. The results of these were often highly dubious, but through applying their prowess the valiant Spaniards, well-versed in arms, following their destiny and war with rigour, occupied a great part of the land. It was not without great risk and loss of life that they sustained their efforts over 6 years, and their tired bodies were fed on tasteless wild roots, which sustained the Spaniards' devotion to their supreme effort of arms against the barbarians, with steadfast hearts and extreme trials infusing fresh energy into their labours.

* * *

After Almagro came *Valdivia*, conquering through a powerful sword and rigorous effort, crossing the river Maule and the rapids of the Itata to reach Andalien, that famous walled city, once happy but now wretched.

A bloody battle took place here, which was on the point of being lost to the Spaniards. But in the face of that looming disaster, God came to their rescue. Others entrusted to chronicle these events can give a far more detailed account of them. Here *Ainavillo*, fierce but honourable chief of the Pencones, was taken prisoner. The Spaniards also reached the famous and expansive river Biobio, which divides the state of Pequeno from that of Nibequeten and fed by its tributaries goes down to the sea. From the river bank, with speed and renewed energy, they passed through the rough terrain of Andalican, to tread the fertile soil of Arauca.

I will not dwell on this any longer, since it is not my intention to give condolences: I will quickly pass these details by and escape the trap of verbosity. I must state categorically that before the Araucanians were subdued, there were many battles which I will leave to be described by those wordier than myself. Low cunning helped much in subjugating (like training animals) a people who had, as if by a miracle, come from the celestial regions. There was a sudden clangour, and the thudding of shots in the dust as if the Immortals were touching them, fighting against them with burning shafts. The Spaniards' heroic deeds confirmed the error of the immortals, affirming the beliefs of the most superstitious, and predicting evils for the immediate future. Insipid, tentative, dubious, clear signals issued from their oppression, before humanity and judged by fate; Arauco succumbed as it had never done before.

Leaving the safe zone, our men pressed forward. They acquitted themselves well, putting Arauco under their dominion and making a great people submit to their will. They founded seven prosperous cities: Coquimbo, Penco, Angol and Santiago, La Imperial, Villa-Rica and del Lago.

Their great victory, the fame and possessions which they acquired led them to such vainglory that 1,000 leagues could not contain 10 of these men, without their ever forgetting that they finally had seven feet of land to match their bellicosity and pretentious conceit. Self-interest and malice grew alongside sweat and alien injuries; hunger and wretched greed gnawed without respite at their liberty. Law, justice, correct jurisdiction: these Valdivia had par excellence; he was careless about great crimes and sins, rigorous about trivialities.

So acted the ungracious Castilian people, always declining in the general estimation, following their vain and proud intent, running through good fortune into prosperity. But the sovereign lord of the heavens attacked this road, allowing those subjected to the yoke to become the wielder of the knife, the bitter executioner.

The Araucanian state was accustomed to giving laws, making demands and being feared: having been knocked down from their throne, and oppressed by mortal men, they were determined to regain their freedom, overturn their subjugation, turn on the Spanish army and destroy the spurious peace which had been imposed on them.

They delivered the first stroke by falling on two of our soldiers, who one day were wantonly killing, without rhyme or reason. Through this deed the Araucanians' daring grew. Without more ado, they began to assemble the people. The main damage was due to Valdivia's failure to amend the penal code of the State: nobody exacts punishment on his own estate.

Now, without fear or shame but with a new-found sense of freedom, the Araucanians broke the reins of homage paid and promise – as the second canto will explain.

Canto II

(This describes the dispute among the Chiefs of Arauco about the election of the Captain General, how the Araucanians took the advice of Chief Colocolo and entered, by deceit, the fortress of Tucapel, where they did battle with the Spaniards.)

* * *

Much happens in the world at when it is in a giddy state, which Fortune has always assisted, lending her hand to its ascent. But having raised it, she sometimes knocks it into a miserable fall – when the blow and the emotions are more intense, but the thought which brings about the change is far less so.

Those who enjoy a bonanza of prosperity do not understand that contentment is empty and negative; they do not reflect on the sudden vicissitudes of all-consuming time, or on its great speed. With haughty and vain confidence they think there is a fixed, permanent foundation to their good fortune – *forgetting that Fortune, for all its roughness, goes round in an inexorable circle.*

They take consolation from a ‘long view’ of everything, which nobody dares to question, and which finally leaves them forever – forgiving nothing, old or new. Honour and credit require a supreme trial at the end of life, in which all are found guilty, even when they may have followed sound principles. If we have lost confidence in our own goodness, what remains for us that is not shot through with pain, grief and sorrow? One would think that Fortune heeds this signal before allowing the sun to warm us with its flames: it is not in Fortune’s power to fix its own wheel, and it is bad to try and change this old-established custom. *The most secure benefit of Fortune is never to have had it.*

Such a turn of Fate applies supremely to this story: an example of that from which one could extricate oneself, showing that wealth, honour and glory, with the best will in the world, are not enough to bring about victory; that every clear sky comes to be clouded, changing the path of Fortune and the prosperous order of Destiny.

Our ungracious people (as I have described them) found themselves prospering, and took great comfort in little things. In such manner they shrugged off their obligations (sure omen of tragic events), so that within an hour there could be lost the dignity and estate which it had taken a thousand years of strenuous effort to gain.

As I have mentioned, *the Indians first thought our people were Gods but soon discovered that we were born of mortal men and women, with all their weaknesses: finding misery in subjugation, they realized their errors stemmed from ignorance; they burned with rage and shame at having been defeated by mere mortals.* Not wishing to put things off any longer, they began to confer in order to reach a prompt decision and make a plan for vengeance; they gathered to make their stand, to proclaim the verdict of revenge – cruel, irrevocable, frightful and horrendous – exemplary for all the world.

The chiefs occupied the fields with their marching people; no general edict, no promises of payment were necessary; the desire for war called them, as they ached for the bitter showdown – death and destruction for the enemy.

It is good to recall the names of those counted in the Junta who, though rude barbarians, gained great renown with substantial cause. In a short time they excelled themselves, winning spectacular victories worthy of notable men, victories that fired with faith those who lived, and blessed those who had fallen.

* * *

Tucapel was the first chief to come to the gathering; he was forever hardened in his enmity towards the Christians; he commanded 3,000 warriors who all obeyed him as if he were a king. Ongol, a clear-minded person, very brave, commanded 4,000. Cayocupil, a bellicose chieftain, was not the last to leave his country; he came third, eager to wage his own war against the invader. This famous man had 3,000 followers, hardened by the rigours of the mountains. Millarapue, though old, came fourth, with 5,000 under his command. Oaicabi, leader of 3,000 strong soldiers, joined on that same day. Lemolemo, commanding 6,000 fighting men, came there from nearby. Mareguano, Gualemo and Lebopia all made a point of coming; it was obvious that they wanted to be first in everything; they each commanded 3,000 warriors. Then Elicura made no delay in coming to the determined place at the appointed time: large in body, robust in constitution, reputed to be one of the strongest Araucanians: some say that this chief, who commanded 6,000 men, suffered from a great madness. The aged Colocolo arrived; others as big and bigger ruled this assembly. Ongolmo, who governed 4,000 warriors, also attended this Council. Puren, governor of 6,000 subjects, promptly turned up, as well as Lincoya – brave and proud, with 6,000 at his side, a giant of a man, haughty in appearance. There was also Peteleguen, a distinguished chief, revered throughout Arauco as a natural Lord, who also took the name of the state of Arauco. Just as the liberated people of Venice, who flourish the most from this form of government, take the name of lordship, so Peteleguen maintained the reputation of Arauco that day.

None of those assembled were personally intimidated by the Christians. But all the 6,000 governed by Petelguen needed to be reassured by Tucapel's orders.

The mighty *Caupolicán*, whom all of Pilmaiquen obeyed, did not attend. But Tome and Andalican, also of the Araucanian regime, did, together with many other chiefs. To avoid verbosity I will not name them all. All those who arrived with downcast faces showed great contentment when they were joined together. After they had thought about their mission, the splendid feast commenced. Then the drink flowed freely; bad were the effects of those huge earthen vats, from word to word, culminating in a deafening noise: no one person heeded the reasoning of another. Everyone knew that the time had come to find who was the bravest, who most worthy to govern the people.

So grew the fury which goaded the people to arms, to grab at the stashes of weapons. They made themselves ready, unceasing with their dangerous, weighty words, knocking down the heavily-laden tables, which had stoked their newly-ignited anger with the heat of food and wine.

The intrepid *Tucapel* proclaimed that the burden of command belonged to him; all those assembled recognized that he deserved the position because of his courage: “Nobody matches me for valour. I am ready to demonstrate this if anyone wants me to . . . (he flaunted his hairpiece) . . . and anyone who wants to contradict me . . .”

Elicura interrupted him, saying “Command of this action has been given to me; any fool who’s planning further madness will taste the point of this lance. Ongolmo, first to be given Power of Attorney, said “I have not lost faith in this army’s power to sustain government by the sword.”

In insane rage, *Lincoya* replied “It is futile to discuss this matter; it is my say-so; I decide who shall be Lord of the world.” “Nobody” said Ongol, “would be so vain as to think of rivalling him; the fear of what could happen would be greater than any glory the deed could give.”

Cayocupil, arrogant and furious, wielded his mace, brandished it at large: “I’ll see who can implement, give substance to what he has said: let us bring the pretenders forward; we shall see which of them can carry the load, who is capable of taking up my offer, and who deserves it, above all others assembled here.

“Come on now,” replied *Lemolemo*, “I accept the challenge! I think nothing of what is rightfully mine being put to the test; I would rather liberate it with the sword to prove it true. If two, four or six were bound to the stake, and if all of them asked me – what I have said would be vindicated.”

Puren, who was standing apart from the rest, heard the great clamour and the inflamed speech; he told the crowd, from which he had withdrawn, that nobody gets out of control in his presence. Who would even think that anyone else gives orders when Puren is around? The cries and the fury spread; some started brandishing their maces, some their pikes.

Tome and the other chiefs thrust themselves into the midst of this throng and, after a struggle, dispersed them. They could do very little in this situation, having no room to wound each other. In an angry voice, his fear put well behind him, *Colocolo*, the oldest chief, took his turn to reason with the crowd:

“Chieftains, defenders of the state: because so much was owed to me, the code of command does not invite me to weigh myself down with true claimants. I see, gentlemen, that according to my rank I am part of the other world; the love which I have always felt for you has encouraged me to counsel you well. Why do we parade our honourable deeds, of which we have such a high opinion, and then try and deny to the world that we have been defeated and reduced to subjection?

“Through this we learn that we will not be oppressed by the Spaniards: far better that our fury be directed in battle against the proud enemy. What fury is yours, O Araucanos, that it callously drags you to perdition? Why do you turn your hands against each other’s entrails instead of resisting the tyrants with them? If you can strike a telling blow against the Christians, why turn your knives against each other? The wish to die has moved you; let not death come in such an abject, debased form.

“Turn your arms and wrathful souls against those criminals who have enslaved you, making outrageous gains, staring the world in the face; thrust your spears against this shameful yoke! Show strength and valour as you do so; but do not spill the blood of the state without completing the tasks of redemption. Do not burden me with seeing how your hearts may respond to my efforts: I greatly fear that your courage, ill-directed, will lead to crooked ends – that, having developed our tenacity, we will use it to massacre our own country: if it has to be this way, let’s cut the old throats first.

“May no weak person pursue his quest without the sharp edge of a sword; then less misfortune will befall him. *Blessed is that life which is assured of an early death.* But, for the sake of our common well-being, I will explain what I mean by this: We are equal to anyone in strength and courage; you are equal to the heavens in birth, lineage, estates and wealth; you all have an equal share in this. In terms of soul and grandeur, you could hold the government of the world. *Our failure to acknowledge this precious gift has caused our present trouble.* By virtue of your arms, I hope that this situation can soon be remedied; it’s mainly a matter of having a Commander-in-Chief, who will direct the others according to his will. It would take a bigger fool to support his shoulder without stopping. And as you are all equal in destiny, let each one strive to be the strongest.”

Nobody’s attention wavered as they all heeded the old man’s words of wisdom. Then after the silence came the discussion; there was much difference of opinion among them but finally, by general consensus, following the best intentions and agreed by all the chieftains, the old man’s proposal was accepted.

One may well ask: why should a powerful state, so experienced in warfare, abundant in laws and ordinances, not have an outstanding head on whom command and governance are devolved, without such a palaver? To that I would reply that such is essential for electing a leader from a large gathering. This process took place for our shattered nation in Penco del Ainvillo. And once the leader was elected, it is said (though it has not been verified) that there was a mouthful of poison in the meal: this ended his life, together with his mission.

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Then the log for the trial of strength was suddenly presented. It was solid, strong Lebanon Cedar, difficult to grasp (I would not hazard a guess as to its weight). *Paicabi* seized it impatiently, and made it fast among the brave men; each man of muscle could support it for six hours, but none of them could make the seventh. *Cayocupil* quickly rushed to the tree trunk. Being the bravest of the gullible, and placed above the tall one, he left in exhaustion after five hours. Gualemo, an eager young man, tried it, but could not exceed that limit. And when his energy was used up, Ongol the fat then took the log, and lasted seven long hours in the game.

It went on for another half-day. Brave Ongolomo got half-way there; Lebopia lasted four-and-a-half hours till he could go on no longer. Lemolemo carried on for seven hours; he never stayed in the midst of things, but went off, jumping back and forth, until his strength failed him. Elicura prepared for the test, and struggled to hold up the tree trunk; after nine hours he quit, unable to hold the wood any longer. Tucapel kept going for fourteen hours, proclaiming his triumph to all. As he did so, the babble of noise plunged into a deep silence.

As the men's coats fell off, their terrible swords were revealed; the hard and heavy men lifted themselves fully into the well-built saddles. Sprightly they ran here and there, showing that little would impede them in the fulfillment of their mission. A full day passed, from sun to sun; the pace was sustained, with no-one getting tired.

Night fell rapidly, abhorred for its blocking of sunlight; but Diana, with her luxuriant appearance, gave them full clarity. Lincoya, worn down by his exertions, did not feel ready for the charge until the sun had reached the middle of the sky, and daytime held full sway. There was nobody among the throng not stunned by fear, convinced that there was only one man strong enough to carry such a heavy load. By the general will Caupolicán was accorded absolute control, all was subordinated to him: at that point he got his due. Ufano was proud of being the most outstanding. Caupolicán arrived alone at this meeting at first light; since birth he had been blind in one eye; his skin was the colour of fine granite; what he lacked in eyesight, he far outweighed in strength and pertinacity. This man had been tall since his youth, he radiated authority, grave and severe, keen to guard all that was right – abrasive, rigorous, but just; big in body, full-chested, dexterous, strong and fleet-footed; clever, wise, astute, determined – always on call, especially in an emergency. An immediate accolade greeted him, though not everyone was delighted; the case was referred, for its points to be assessed. Since Apollo had already hidden in the deep sea, they were determined that the testing should go on till the long-awaited break of dawn.

They struggled through the night with great tenacity to debate what had become an issue among the people. This depended on Lincoya, who claimed that he was braver than Caupolicán; there were points in his favour and points against him. The others, without taking dubious bets, were waiting for the sunrise to see which contestant would last out.

Then the roseate dawn began to edge the clouds with a thousand tints; it dispersed the miserable people and the workers to tend the farms; freshness and colour were restored to the withered fields. A new light illuminated this valley when Caupolicán came to the trial. Showing confidence and disdain, grasping the hard, gnarled tree trunk as if it were a delicate cane, he put it into Lincoya's hands: the people were dumb-struck to see that strong-bodied man looking so nervous. Lincoya's complexion changed colour, as he was not confident of winning. The wise barbarian slowly went, and daylight came in full glory; the sun shortened the long shadows, but never relented in its persistence.

At sunset the light again retired, but there was no weakness in it; the stars shone brightly, and this valiant man showed no weariness. The clear moon rose to see the party in the cold, dank, shadowy shelter, blanketing the fields and forests in a lugubrious, sinister black veil. Caupolicán did not renege on his bet; he moved with new strength and power, conducting himself as if he and no-one else could bear the weight.

Between the two highest contenders the wife of *Titon* appeared, her golden hair disheveled, shaking with icicles, which with their moisture made the withered floral fields go green again; it set, like flowers, some pearls among the jewels. The chariot of Phaeton, racing, left the sea by its accustomed route. Its shades picked up the mountains from the vista of the sun; that brave man, sustaining the heavy weight, moved back and forth without fatigue, though once again the black, thick log turned, seeming to run away. The moon graciously deferred its departure through a long space of time. Finally – cloudy, burning and sluggish, it made itself scarce in face and light. It looked more beautiful when it brought the strange trial into full view and, having stood directly above the winner, knocked itself down into the Southern Hemisphere. The brave man held up the tree trunk with no sign of exhaustion or grief, conquering his fatigue through his striving, his strength growing as was usual for him. Apollo, in pursuit of his friend, spread out the rays of his fire; by all appearances, the son of Leocan was firmer and more constant than the headman. When the sun had set, the enormous weight of the swords prevailed. With one thrust they were thrown into a shapeless mess, showing that no other soul could hold them; with one voice, the surrounding crowd pronounced sentence, saying: “to such firm, strong men we delegate the realization of our duties”.

The new judge and his plan of action were formalized with more ceremonies, ratifying his appointment as captain; the whole people submitted to his governance. He grew in renown, and in general opinion was greatly feared. Many people stayed leagues away from him, trembling, respecting him as a king.

That occasion was attended by a thousand people who that day felt many doubts; it seemed as if what they had seen and heard was some form of fiction or poetry. They knew that it had an element of artifice; they respected the prudence of wise Colocolo, who noticed the harmful discord and differences among the people, and the great danger for which his country was heading. They did not fail to notice that Caupolicán, a man of great physique and strength, endowed with rare diligence, courage and self-sufficiency, was at first absent from the gathering.

Because the election was getting so long drawn-out, he shrewdly proposed an audacious plan. This was then ratified by Caupolicán, who had secretly given his advice during the protracted debate. This brought the negotiations to a close, so that the people would follow Caupolicán’s ends and good desire.

With great pomp and ceremony the senate held a sumptuous feast, celebrating the election of the new captain. There, with caution, in order to focus attention on each great cause, Sergeant Palta (who had been constrained to silence) was ordered to pick out from the throng the 80 liveliest and most alert men, so that they could be briefed individually about the stratagem.

The eighty so chosen were mainly the greatest in strength but the least well known. Among their number were Cayeguano and Alcatipay de Talcaguano – two soldiers of great repute – adroit men, inured to adversity, and perceptive off all kinds of danger – by whom the rest of them were to be directed.

Three forts, occupied by our people, protected the security of the land. They had strong, high walls perforated with deep portholes, surrounded by deep ditches, buzzing with chattering soldiers – well-versed in the toils of war, with their horses, artillery and provisions. One of these forts was near the site of the great feast: the Araucanian warriors were happy, proclaiming that they had no fears in the world. With vain discourse and protestations they longed to resort to the sword. But Caupolicán wisely proposed a more effective remedy.

Some were favoured surrounding the nearby fort; others proposed taking the road to Penco with full squadrons; each party gave their reasons. But Caupolicán would have none of either; he retired to the pavilion, where he summoned the eighty men.

His plan was as follows: Having resolved to put the fort to the torch and sword, it would be better, and easier, to enter it in disguise. After having convinced the Spaniards that they were complying with the terms of the treaty, the most diligent among them would occupy the steps and the entrance. The entrance was blocked against the Araucanians, sealed off to all comers, save those bearing essential provisions for the Spanish residents, and for their army, fortified by the proud Bellona. So the wily Araucanian soldiers went in, loaded with grass, hay and firewood. Deaf to demands and questions, they followed their intentions along the prearranged path, they had buried spears furnished with iron tips inside their loads, and strung them together in an orderly fashion. Then they crossed the declared boundary of the fort, its inmates unaware of their ruse.

Going over the bridge and wall, through the doorway, they looked haggard, withered, wretched; they made gestures of pain, some limped as if exhausted. But from within their loads they drew their sturdy weapons – with menace, pride, and a confidence spawned by the hope of rapid vengeance. The hardy Spaniards leaped up, coming so near to an angered death, ran to their arms, bowled over by this cunning stratagem; determined to conquer or die, they rushed to resist the mad fury of the intrepid Araucanian host, some with sallets, some with cuirasses. Attacking with furious impetus, they swung their swords back and forth, all showing a bloody force more than anything Mars had ever spurred on; all of them, eager to conquer, looked for new ways to direct their swords' sweeps, giving their enemies an easy opening to death.

Hearts and courage were refreshed by the blood drawn from hard steel. The Spanish forced the Indians to the wall. The Indian squadron were driven from their ground, so weakly secured, littered with weapons cast down by forced blows; they were disarmed.

Coming into such dire straits, constrained by fear and thirst for vengeance, consumed by anger and full of fury, the Christians clutched their swords. They fell upon the proud Araucanians, who had been weakened by the latest attack – entered their midst, hacked them, knocked them down, depriving many of land and life. The Spaniards always prevailed, wreaking enormous havoc amongst the brave Indians, who paid the price of little brain and great courage. But scarcely had Cayeguan and Talcaguano left when, by forced march, Caupolicán's squadron appeared, thinking the battle was already over. But when they found it was not so, and they came in sight of the fort, they surrounded it, saying that they would raze it to the ground. A young Spaniard, fearless man of our people, in the middle of the throng,

unaided said: "Let the most valiant sally forth, and take the challenge of 1 against 30, I would not flinch from standing against 1,000!"

Not so quickly did the proud ones respond to the roars of the helpless, the abandoned who at a distance, orderless, knew they were separated from their people. The Araucanians heard the strident voices of the Spaniards, greedy for booty, who promptly hacked down over 100 of them.

The valiant Spaniards were not frightened by so many coming at them, until the dense squadron coming to face them started to advance. The course of the proud enemy was stemmed, their assault stopped; in fury the Spaniards threw themselves amongst them, forgetting that some of their own number would be dragged to the ground.

Blow by blow, they struggled for the ground, the swords swinging on all sides, scattering here a detachment, there a squadron, to the point where one could see the biggest heap of corpses: this unequal war was waged on even terms when the well-armed Spaniards, quickly opening a big, hidden door, sallied forth to the defence of their friends.

Elsewhere the opposite was true: to the midst of this field, this broad plain earmarked for the use of bloodthirsty Mars, came the Spanish and the Araucanian host. Here the first battle took place; there were 100 Indians to every Castilian; they turned their pure, unstained iron against those who had bravely sallied forth. They threw themselves with fury into the fray, not doubting the power of their arms to engage the enemy, and with their sharp points probing the parts where they could do most damage. Just as the Cyclops can continue hammering on their anvils in the volcanoes without getting tired, so they hammered, beat and trimmed, smoothing the walls of the concave caverns.

The battle was evenly matched. There was a great difference in the numbers and quality of each side, though the Spaniards' courage made up the difference. But with diabolical fury, coming up against a 1 to 100 resistance, they wrenched the Christians from their saddles. The Spaniards, unable to withstand this onslaught, left the field swarming with that mighty host and hurled themselves towards the gates of the fort. Barring entry to the barbarians, they lifted the drawbridge and opened fire. Taking the initiative in defence, they bore their fiery missiles on high to the top of the walls, fearing a ferocious attack from the enemy.

But seeing that all was lost, that there was little or nothing they could do, they agreed that they should abandon the fort, which should be totally destroyed. So when dark night had fallen, and the world was at its quietest, they carried out their evacuation. When they opened the gates, they were at the ready, fully mounted; throwing down the drawbridge, and spurring on their fast horses, the squadron made a frontal attack, breaking through the wounding and the congestion. By good fortune they reached Puren, a secure place shrouded in night and general darkness, without losing a single man.

* * *

While this was going on in Arauco, in the neighbouring region of Penco, the home of Captain Valdivia, then flourishing with rich gold mines, news spread of the restructuring of the state. The general, always a friend of noise and liberty, always desirous of war, was dismissed from his position. He found the news humiliating. He promised no service, repudiated his

responsibilities and, raising his proud, shameless head, renounced the allegiance he had sworn to Emperor Charles V. *Valdivia*, lazy and negligent, cynical and careless, had many friends in Concepcion who trusted his words and would, if he led them properly, go on foot to the ruined fort with soldiers, weapons, munitions, six pieces of ordnance and two cannons.

The Araucanians got wind of some Spanish soldiers in the vicinity. This was a pretext for Tucapel to join battle; he resolved to set an example of punishment which would resound throughout the land, so that the invader would never go to war there again.

But unprepared, Valdivia changed course, turning from his advantageous path, twisting it, abandoning it for another – through greed, eager to find a gold mine. In order to see the tribute and beautiful gifts offered by its rich veins, he stopped, drawn by greed, cutting short the prosperous spin of fate.

Then (as I have said), he reached a decision at the promised time; the tempting metal which he extracted riveted his fascination. Then he and his men sallied forth when it would have been far better not to do so. *I will conclude this canto here; in the next I shall describe the greed which motivated them.*

Canto III

(Valdivia, with a small party of Spaniards and friendly Indians, goes on a punitive expedition to the territory of Tucapel. They corner the Araucanians retreating through a narrow pass. In the ensuing battle Valdivia and all his band are put to death by the great courage and exertions of Lautaro.)

* * *

Oh incurable sickness! Oh agonising fatigue nourished by such diligence, common vice and tempting bonds – will-power untempered by reason is ever the enemy of welfare and the public good – ravenous beast, with insatiable thirst; beginning and end of all evil: oh infinite among mortals!

We do not share the pompous self-satisfaction of gentlemen happy with their status, nor at the other extreme do we know the miseries of poor labourers. Nor can we be assured of limits to the drive always to excel. Good fortune, riches and estates satisfy the bravest, but not completely.

Look at Valdivia, poor in his childhood. The first estate he owned was tiny; later he had 50,000 vassals paying him two gold Marks per day. But this, and much more, was still not enough; hunger continued to goad him. Greed was the cause of so much warfare, and of the total loss of his land. It was he who found the isolated Indians of the southern regions; by him they were slave-driven with brutal impositions and extortions. So, bitter from their thirst for vengeance, they sought new ways, new inventions to regain their liberty, and raised their hopes through their exertions.

As everybody knows, we who are in good health give advice to sufferers, but do not really know how to help them, though we appreciate our assistance being proclaimed. When we are in a state of calm, what sense does it make to discuss the traumas of warfare? What does it mean to talk of advice and reason when one is far from a real, dangerous situation? How people who suffer detest those who live free behind secure doors! How effective is it to direct things from there, all well-arranged in middling comfort? With what ease the comfortable can decide, observing success and damage from a safe distance. God alone knows the right path – so tortuously narrow when men come to cross it.

Valdivia got through his working day and the hard disposition of obdurate fate, unaccustomed to its fury, its dark omens, unused to feeling fear of a bad future. Suspecting an ambush if he took the safest path, he sent an advance guard; but they never returned with any news. When our people came to the appointed place, there was no sign of the vanguard. Some were resigned to defeat; others proposed blocking its path. They took counsel to sustain

the appearance of being on top of the situation, and finally resolved to change, offering everything to the Fates – to the same destiny and the same death.

Fear also pursued them; they risked their valiant arms, and committed their dubious success to a salubrious fate and generous destiny; but having gone less than two leagues along the road, they found the heads of their comrades – severed from their bleeding bodies, hung high on tree trunks.

Such a horrendous spectacle does not shake the resolve of firm souls. They were already seething with rage; but this horrendous fanned their flames, parched them with a thirst for vengeance. Galvanised by fury, they cursed and grumbled about the delay. Only Valdivia was silent and got the point; but sensing the tension, he broke silence, saying:

“Oh comrades! How all effort, courage and intelligence is constrained. Already you see the pitiful state of the land; our distress gives a flag to the wind. You see faith broken, treaties and agreements in tatters, bloody warfare. I feel the grating trumpet in my ears, and see a devilish fire ignited. You know well the strength of the state, authorising so much damage at our hands. Look at the way fortune has aided you, guiding your swords with her hand; think of the toil and blood it has cost to nourish this land. Since we have time and have made preparations, it would be good to take new advice.

“We must never fail to hold these adversaries firmly in our memories, and realise that if we had not conquered them, we could not now gain victory on the battlefield elsewhere. It would simply be empty arrogance, vainglory which the real world would not tolerate. I am doubtful about our expedition; I really am not convinced that we can satisfy our cause and our honour.”

“The raw age and inexperience of the young levies who arrived here then, nonchalant and world-weary, were shown by their headstrong stupidity: ‘Oh Captain: give us permission to proceed, as a group of ten. Without support, we will destroy the Araucanian band and clear the path. Whatever we do on the straight and narrow, if that is not what we do for our honour then it is certain that, however much we have done – when taking one step backwards, we will miss it. We shall show a brave face to danger, in which lies the glory that we are seeking.’”

Valdivia, on hearing this reply, was dumbstruck by rage and panic.

“Oh esteemed Valdivia! How much do you feel the truth of your harangue! We are unaccustomed to treating you as a foot-soldier; we know you as a good captain. If you proceed, you go to certain death, and you know it. But you seem to want to lose your life.”

At this point there came a friendly Indian who, on his knees, in a loud voice, said: “Oh Captain – take heed of my words; do not pass through the forbidden zone. I swear that 20,000 warriors await you in Tucapel: they are sworn to face – without fear, an honourable death, rather than live the life of cowards.”

What the friendly Indian proposed caused sudden unrest; it reflected a frozen fear of the Araucanians, and the sad deaths that would ensue from entering their midst. But the Governor, who until then had been confused, told them: “Gentlemen: what doubts can we have? How can we be shaken if we do not see the enemy?”

Spiritedly spurring on his horse, with no further words of persuasion, he broke his path. His brave company, their limbs shaking with fear, followed him. Soon they discovered the vale of Tucapel; the wall seemed far away; it looked colourful, riding high before them, its broad foundations ravaged.

Valdivia appeared there, and said “Oh you Spanish, steadfast in your confidence! This castle is such a strong point in the land that my hopes are centred on it; you see the perfidious enemy before you, and the hostile lances that menace us: on this I have no more words of advice. Only fighting can save us.”

As I have said, before they are able to take this reasoning on board, when they were surrounded on all sides by dense squadrons, their spears hard-tipped, crying “Cheats and brigands! You will leave this land today with your lives, paying us your debt long overdue.”

Valdivia came out bravely to test his men’s strength and fortune: he ordered them to approach the thinnest enemy squadron, so that it could not close with the Spaniards; then Bobadilla, without further exhortation from Valdivia – with few men but strenuous effort, assaulted the squadron of Mareande.

The drenched pikemen of the barbarians waited for the few soldiers but, aroused at the time of the attack, opened a big gate and turned aside, giving the Spaniards free entry, without resistance; and in the middle of this action, the squadron picked them up; the open lines closed and the Christians were smothered in their midst.

Just as the hungry cayman – when it senses a school of fish, moves against the current with great gusto, agitating the clear water in turn, opening its great mouth – cautiously gathers all the fishes there, and, tightening its concave jowls, destroys them, to assuage its insatiable stomach, so this little squadron of suicide soldiers was gathered: in a flash they were consumed – without one Christian escaping alive. The Araucanian army was already on the move, with great clamour and well-ordered steps, in obedience to sonorous blasts of the trumpets, and closed in on all sides without fear.

Mareande's blood-drenched squadron held the path with the greatest courage; Valdivia, undaunted, going forward, ordered his sergeant, with his finest, hand-picked men, to make a strong movement against the Indians; a mere ten Spaniards offered a bold front to death. Fearless, with slack reins, they sallied forth against the importunate barbarian hordes. In the melee that followed none of the ten men failed to get a bloodstained lance. Only one of them was unsaddled; he, in nausea and ultimate anguish, chest open to rabid death, fell upon his wound and died, followed by the other nine, performing such signal deeds that they justly deserve to be elevated to eternal fame. All ten died in pieces, wanting revenge for the (Valdivia's?) death. Here the Spanish trumpet could be heard, giving the final signal to attack.

Gritting their teeth and grasping their lances, the Spaniards sallied forth so fiercely that they forced four squadrons to retire for a great distance; they mobbed, wounded, dealt death, cutting off legs, arms and heads – a hateful sight to the barbarians, who then retreated; the field was recovered.

When life and death are locked in such a struggle, may God forgive those who fall in it. When both sides have offended, the ground for which many die is highly esteemed and passionately defended. Nobody wanted to take a single step backwards. All the grassland was drenched in blood, discoloured from its natural greenness.

The Spaniards' tempered armour shielded them from the murderous weapons; they in turn cut down the covered entrails of their enemies with the blows of carnivores; heads were divided from the bodies which kept their vital spirit and dragged to the bloody ground, other eyes already testing them. Vigorous steel turned the enemy to the colour of blood. The Araucanians were always the most furious in attack, but the weakest in combat . . . nobody can pretend that there is any rest but the ultimate rest of death; the most fearful only waits for his death to be avenged.

Craving for death and oblivion generated an extraordinary strength in our men, through which the Araucanians lost the field, with dishonour and great loss of life: at the tips of the swords, voices resounded: "Victory for Spain!"

But hard and obdurate fate gave a strange twist to what had been ordained.

The son of a well-known chief, who had served Valdivia as a page, caressed and favoured by his master, re-entered Valdivia's service in that season, moved by love of his country. Returning to his countrymen, he began to arouse them with a great voice, spurring them on with these words:

“Oh blind people, driven by fear; to whom do you turn your timorous breasts? Shall all our renown, grown over a thousand years, perish here? Today you lose your strength, never before violated; your laws, rights and powers – those of respected, free men, are dashed to pieces – you have become slaves, subjugated, beaten down. You stain your pure lineage, and incubate in its trunk an incurable plague – pathetic, perpetual, ignominious dishonour. Your weakness is the wonder of your adversaries, as is the loss of breath and the fiery thud of horses, their flanks drenched in sweat and thick with blood. Let us not throw away our customs, inherited from our ancestors, nor let the name of Arauca tumble from its peak into a state of degradation. Let us shed the heavy yoke of slavery, and turn brave torsos to face hard steel. Why do you brandish powerful swords but keep them far from danger? What I say is engraved in my memory: blind and shameful fear distresses you. Will you remain at the mouth of eternal history, as those who freed your shackled country? Turn again, do not miss out on a great victory which a generous fate is naming for you; at least move your nimble feet and you will see how I shall die in your defence.”

At that, he brandished a thick, quivering lance against Valdivia his master, giving such a mighty demonstration, arousing hope, to persuade more of them to attack. He threw himself into the Spanish band, as if with great heat into cold water, like a deer in the hot summer to temper the sun with something cool. With just the first thrust, Valdivia was pierced; the next one penetrated the middle of his side; the thick lance was very hard, and its bloodstained point came out the other side. He jumped round again and pierced the leg of another soldier; this blow broke his strong pike, leaving a big piece of it inside the wound; the damaged weapon was rent. Picking up from the ground a hard, heavy mace, he killed, wounded, destroyed, at last casting his weapon down. In a short space of time, he cleared a big area in which the battle was resumed in its entirety. Then it subsided and the Araucanians gave chase, moving so lightly hither and thither, as if wanting to inflict wounds on the empty air.

Nobody has heard such a frightful proof, nor read of it in ancient writings, that a great victory can pass to the hands of the vanquished – or that valour alone, and nothing else, from one barbarian boy, could by force snatch a decisive victory from the Christians. What of the Publios Decios, who gave their lives for their beloved country – or Curcio, Horace, Scèveva and Leonidas, who could give such a signal example – or those who, in the hardest-fought wars, gained renown by the sword: Furio, Marcelo, Fulvio, Marco Sergio, Filon, Scèveva and Dentato? Tell me, what did these famous people do to equal the act of this barbarian? What enterprise, what battle did they undertake whose outcome, at the very least, did not stand in some doubt? What risks did they take, what danger did they incur which was not motivated by the thirst for power, spurred on by great interests which embolden the timid?

Many initiate heroic deeds, and gallantly offer themselves to death, greedy for fame and glory; but they cannot sustain a strong blow. They show themselves to be constant and spirited until their luck starts to run out – then, once the fragile credit of fortune is broken, lose courage and determination. This was the decree and death sentence declared against our

country, clinching the uprising; that youth stood against fortune and the fates, driven by his own will – against the fury of the victor, eliciting a conqueror in the timid, the defeated.

The ground was swamped by the two armies, and the unequal battle raged on. When this was reported to Caupolicán, he turned to the friendly faces. The people noticed this: feeble passion turned to rage when they saw that a mere boy could put up a resistance which as a people, they had failed to do.

This is what usually happens to honourable souls, suddenly become inattentive, or when in suspicious circumstances, others – not in the know – think they are fleeing from fights and dangerous encounters; but if they see that the ones they know are their followers – then, through their embarrassment they are driven to fury, propelled by honour. So the Araucanians turned on their conquerors; brandishing their humble arms, they cried vows of death. The earth trembled and groaned from the horrendous fury with which both sides gave themselves to the battle – spilling, with rage and valiant force, the blood of that small band whom they met.

There *Diego Oro* knocked down *Paynaguala*, and pierced his breast with one thrust; but Caupolicán noticed it, and took scant pleasure from the deed. With one swing of his iron mace, he struck a furious blow to the right, which broke through Diego's helmet, making his brains come showering out. By this deed the victim was disfigured so badly as to be unrecognisable; the helmeted head, and all his side where the blow had struck, were ground to pulp. Valdivia struggled with Ongolmo and the attack was turned on the assailant. Valdivia wounded Ongolmo with one blow, neutralising the Araucanian's thrust.

That goaded Valdivia into fury. He abandoned Ongolmo and went for Leucoton, a vigorous boy who was embroiled in a great melee, defending his position against Juan de Lamas de Reinoso. With great skill and art, Leucoton sustained the struggle on equal terms. This fight was simmering down when Valdivia joined in; some of the Araucanian band came to help Leucoton out; then death and destruction were renewed. People thronged together from one end to the other; the deafening noise rose to the stars, drawing thousands of sparks from the weapons. For a long time, the outcome of the battle hung in the balance. The atmosphere was full of sonorous peals; the earth was red, drenched in blood; whoever sought and longed for an honourable death, whoever closed in arms against the other in order to notch up a kill, had a stab with his dagger at the weakest. For Juan de Gudiel it was not well to continue the struggle for mastery; so without more ado, in a vain gesture, he closed with Guaticol, who was fully his match. At that point Puren, his brother, was nearby, wounded him in the side with his dagger, so that de Gudiel departed from the world.

Andres de Villaroel, already weakened through loss of blood, went into the midst of the barbarians and there attained the most honourable death. Also Juan de las Penas, badly wounded, breaking into the dense, armed mob, made combat; and so fate made them, simultaneously, equals in death.

There was a huge difference in numbers between the infidels and the baptized; the former seemed innumerable, the latter only 60. Unpredictably, fickle Fortune, who until then had remained dubious, approved of evil, declaring to be just that cause and opinion hitherto taken as unjust.

Two thousand friendly Indians who supported Valdivia's band, well practised in archery, increased the sanguinary destruction, spreading more blood; bravely they faced death, to sustain the lives of the unconquered Spaniards whom they accompanied.

Whenever the good Valdivia held his ground in an action, he did with his sword all that the mighty Mars could have done. But it was not enough for him to go it alone, without the greater part of his men; the others, seeing his certain death ahead, did not rally, did not brace themselves to intercede. Falling two by two, three by three, the small band bled; the barbarian attack intensified; the end, already predicted, was obvious. The weakened band was reduced to only 40 soldiers, who steadfastly refused to surrender, holding on until brute force crushed them.

Valdivia was calm and solitary, accompanied by a priest who had come there by chance. Seeing the destruction in the field, the bad remedy and small company, he said: "You are excused from fighting; let us save our lives in another way." The Mass Priest took to horse at great speed and rode among the Indians.

It was just like two proud groundhogs who, accustomed to escaping from hunters, are pursued by tenacious tracker dogs thirsting for wild blood, and run into a pack of noble Irish greyhounds: with no less ardour, no less fleet of foot, the Araucanians drove through the wretched Christians. They threw such a tempest of blows, sir, that it seemed to pour like a torrent. Coming at last to close quarters, they were halted by a rocky path: the barbarians hurled themselves upon them, not considering the last one to be brave.

Then the priest died. Humiliated, Valdivia was hauled up before the Araucanian senate. Caupolicán was delighted to see him alive in such a pitiful condition; with the voice of a conqueror and an imperious gesture he menaced and interrogated him. Like a miserable captive, Valdivia replied and pleaded, humbly and obediently, that they would not put him to death, and that the laws of Spain would leave the Araucanians land secure, in peace. It is said that the Indians were quite moved by these words from a contrite Valdivia. But one of them, venerated for his age, said "do you want to waste time and negotiations on a worn-out wreck like this?" Pointing to Valdivia in the crowd, he threw a great cane of hard juniper at him.

Just as a furious bull, firmly bound to a stake, is roaring, surrounded by timid people who look on it in admiration, and the skilful, experienced butcher, raising his hard and heavy mace, brings it down swiftly on the concave nape of the bull's neck and rapidly despatches it, stretches it out in death: so the determined old dog looked at Valdivia with an evil scowl, supporting himself with both hands, lifted the iron-tipped stick on high. He did not strike his rough old blow in vain; it delivered Valdivia to the eternal land of dreams; he crashed to the ground, his body stretched out; he had given his life.

This Indian was called *Leocato*, and the great Caupolicán was angry with him. "We wanted to work on this despicable man; but we were asked by the army to leave him to the fate that had been prepared for him. The destruction of them all was completed, so that no Christian escaped the trial to convey the sad news."

Only two Spaniards remained alive. But when the surviving 3,000 friendly Indians saw our people bloodstained and defeated, they rushed to save themselves, showed themselves to be like stars, and escaped with no-one seeing them. They hid in a patch of scrubland, from which they observed the end of the struggle. Here the dark night fell, to veil half the sky; with its dark wings it covered the curves and roundness of the wide ground. The conquering army closed in combat without fear, and then ordered dances in wide circles to celebrate their victory.

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The news was spread throughout the Araucanian regiments; by sunrise the field was covered with a vast multitude of people who had rushed there, forming a general assembly of youths and old men, boys and women, to take part in the celebrations.

When the birds announced the break of dawn and reiterated their bright songs, they circled a grove of high trees, which surrounded the spacious plain, and here impaled the heads which had been severed from Spanish bodies; the trunks, stripped of their branches, were adorned with plunder. Behind that circle and seat, surrounded by a pleasant and expansive forest, in memory and honour of the victory, they toasted the happy feast; the wine also heightened the courage which had put Spain into great danger; it warned against the humblest soldier leaving walled fortifications.

There the consensus was that they should without delay double their marches, and that a great host of them should return to the cities recently relieved; they could pounce upon them. They could be ruined by fear alone, but if they acted decisively, the country and its honour could be restored, without leaving a single Christian alive.

And having given sufficient orders to complete the implementation of their fury, they longed to outdo the Spaniards, thinking to put them in such a tight spot, by force of arms, just as the Spanish practised against foreign nations.

Leocato's son well understood the vanity of the intent, and tried to dissuade them: skilful and wise, he proposed a better course of action, taking account of the weather, the margin of hope and the seasons in which it would be better to pursue it. When the feast was over, and everyone was very drunk, he spoke to them thus:

“Beware of the words of those who most ignore reason. To protect your children and wives, you must act according to the correct principles. Your reputation, honour, land and property are on the point of being recovered; let time, which is our father, our counsel, take our preparations in hand.

“You have put Valdivia to death, and destroyed an important base; the coming of vengeance is for sure, and then it will be known in the cities. Let us give the enemy free passage; this will secure our part most strongly. Then, with full fury, at full speed, we take that vengeance which will be so more thorough after they have turned round. We hold the keys to victory in our hands – a thousand secure passages, quagmires, lagoons and marshes, big mountains – rugged and hard. Here the Araucanians can fight much better: the Spaniards can do so behind their walls; every man is wiser, stronger and bolder when working within his accustomed routine.

“I am come to speak to you to show you how we can assure our victory, how to have the great showdown we hope for on sites of our own choosing. Then there will be nobody in the world who can dispute the reason and justice which is ours. When they become afraid of seeking us out, let them go back home and stay there.”

Everyone paid careful heed to the general's speech; it was approved by the majority who saw the wisdom of his plan. Caupolicán turned to the young man through whom the victory, once lost, could be regained through a miraculous test. To favour him more, Caupolicán grasped his left hand with his own right, saying: “Oh young man: you have extended the good name and boundaries of Arauca! Through you the state is redeemed you – destroyer of the power of tyranny! This victory is due to you alone, worthy of a great reward and immortal memory.”

He turned to face the Senate:

“Gentlemen; so manifest is the point that young Lautaro has put to us (for the valiant youth also bore that name); In order to repay you for the authority you have invested in me (though it is not enough to cover the debt), I make him a Captain and my Deputy.

“With the warriors whom you chose, since you bore witness to their deeds, we must proceed to the site which seems most suitable to receive the enemy until, as we hope, they go there;

because I and the rest of my comrades will occupy the entry to Elicura, waiting for the same conjuncture.”

The young man accepted the mission, together with the rank of general bestowed on him; the general consensus approved. Then, following custom, Caupolicán cut a lock of his hair and made it into a large plait, in token of that responsibility.

Lautaro was neither large nor small in stature; strong in muscle, in good shape physically, firm and taut in limb, broad-shouldered and deep-chested, gentle of disposition and beautiful in gesture. He was industrious, wise, alert, of great reasoning power, prudence and wisdom, his mind was focused on big issues. For him the celebrations were extended, playing ever new games – high jumps, contests, trials never before attempted, dancing round the fires throughout the night. There were such precious and joyful signals; neither the Greeks nor the Trojans, when they extended their games, were so rich and glorious.

There came to Caupolicán an Indian, tense and breathless; he had lost his colour, his gestures were weary, drenched in sweat and caked with dust: “Sir; help quickly! Your camp is bloodshot and disaster looms; most of those ambushed were destroyed. On the land of Elicura there descended forty valiant well armed warriors, with the finest hearts, on swift, light horses; by them alone two squadrons of your pikemen have been annihilated. Having seen this horrible slaughter, I ran as fast as I could to bear the news.”

With his face frozen, Caupolicán struggled to assuage these fears, saying that this should not be possible for such a small group of armed men. With his customary diligence, he commanded the new Lieutenant, whom he was guiding, to proceed at top speed with the advance guard; the main body was to follow. Lautaro, no slouch about getting into action, choosing a squadron adequate for the purpose, marched at great speed, eager to gain respect from his people . . .

But the sonorous clangour of Mars unjustly bids me delay: now is the time to deal with the 40, and their bitter, bloody combat. Their renown, earned through courage in arms, gleams as did their swords, and makes their memory eternal; they will give an example to history. But I seem to have come to the end of this instalment; I could not presume to describe such a thing now, unless it is with new breath in the next Canto.

Canto IV

(40 Spaniards assemble to join Valdivia in battle against Tucapel: they fall into an Indian ambush, and have a bitter struggle; Lautaro arrives with reinforcements. 7 Spaniards die together with all the friendlies they brought with them; the others, by taking a great risk, have a narrow escape.)

* * *

How good, how vital is justice! Through her a thousand evils are halted in their tracks: if recalcitrant Arauca was powerful when compared to its corrupt neighbours, and spread its wrath so far, that was for want of timely punishment: *a wound which is not treated promptly finally requires the most drastic remedy.*

It is no virtue to plan further damage on the basis of what has already been done; if the first action has applied the ways of evil, it is vice, and so it is morally negligent to follow it up. But evil's path requires less rigour than does clemency's; those who take it lose their strength and virtues. But he who fearlessly cuts the broken finger from the arm is truly clement and compassionate. I do not want to say that each step brought steel into the hands of justice, unless it were in keeping with the gravity of the case, and the strength and focus of the malice. In this instance we will see how the head, corrupted by avarice, gave room for evil to take root in people's minds. One cannot understand how a faithless person can take an initiative, how it can become inhuman to be an agent of justice, how bloodshed is needed to enhance credit. It is hard to fathom those who, with unjust hands, without motive, cause or foundation, only through shallow vainglory, want to leave monuments to their evil for posterity.

There is no lack of incidents and circumstantial details which I could describe with my curious pen, but I will not dwell on things both insignificant and dangerous: time, and not my writings, will tell about this. Perhaps the wise men would consider it suspect: I can only say that in their opinion, where the king is missing, the injuries remain. Returning to our subject: we could dwell on madness, but this labour would be in vain, pouring out floods of reason to the winds in the desert: I will just say that I fought with our proud squadrons, gaining fame and rewards, honour and glory, doing things worthy of memory. These were such noble deeds as to require intensive research and a proper chronicler. I would add that whoever reads these memoirs, where all the events are summarised, must bear with my poor style and limited writing ability. In all, my account can only be a brief digest. But I here will name the soldiers involved in the campaign who rightly merit praise.

Almagro, Cortes, Cordova, Nereda, Moran, Gonzalo Hernandez, Maldonado, Openalosa, Vergara, Castaneda and Diego Garcia Herrero all turned up; but there are also Nino, Escalona

and others to complete the roster; lastly comes Don Leonardo Manrique, among the best of them in valour.

These forty were the ones who came to link up with Valdivia. They had set forth from the imperial city without knowing that Valdivia was dead. Ascending the cliffs of Puren, and reaching their highest point, they found scattered tracks, signs of a gathering of warriors. They knew that the situation had changed, and that an assembly was being gathered. Neither did they twist their schedule on this account, nor did fear blunt their firm intent. As it broke, the fresh coloured dawn radiated great happiness; shadows retreated from the sun when the men discovered the luscious valley.

There the Indians lay in ambush, hoping our men would come their way, longing to get to grips with them in disarray, before they sensed any danger. They covered themselves in foliage until, their ruse undetected, they could sally forth and deal destruction. The 40 Spaniards descended a short, steep incline, which levelled out into a valley where the barbarians lay watching them, hidden under their leaves. None of our men realised what the bushes were, when the Indians, suddenly sounding strident trumpets and raucous tambourines, swarmed into the paths and roads.

For a hunter there is no greater happiness than when, unexpectedly, the hare is suddenly flushed into the middle of the path, and jumps excitedly between the feet of the pursuers. So it was for the nearby squadron lying in ambush for our Spaniards and, at that very instant, hurling themselves in front of their horses. At one point the barbarians formed a wall of bodies, in the shape of a diamond; but the Spaniards did not stop until they had traversed its full extent: men, pikes and maces clashed, swirled round, to put an end to the battle; in view of the adversary's strength, this was with more courage and effort than hope.

Two squadrons, which diverged from the three, surrounded the Spaniards and blocked their escape route. Getting surrounded by barbarians, they thought of opening up a channel: crammed together, the Indians attacked again. When each squadron was broken up, they withdrew to their original position, sustaining heavy casualties. Encircled by death the Spaniards fought desperately, cutting a path to the desolate site and the fort, knocking down the enemy, right and left, so that the Indians mingled with them; our men cut down the enemy on all sides.

The road to Elicura narrowed into the small fold of a mountain because a lake enclosed by the valley below; this was a stroke of luck for us, since they had spent the day making war; only one man succumbed to the barbarian arrogance.

As they went through some thick bushes, an Indian appeared at the top of a steep hill, his clothes and his face worn down; he looked them straight in the face. As he crossed their path, he took from his bosom a folded paper – on which Juan Gomez had written that very day, with the news of Valdivia's death.

The same messenger grew tearful about having left them earlier. He told them of Valdivia's pitiful fate, and the rest of what had happened, including the furious barbarians having razed the fort to the ground. Making a desperate plan to help out, they turned into a plain on their right. This area was surrounded by low hills, although it was open via this path. It was sheltered to the East, West and North, but to the South they were exposed to attack. By a supreme effort they reached the main path, which was covered by agile barbarians – spread out in an extended file, thirsting for the blood of the baptized.

Likewise the barbarians, jostling against our men, swarmed into the plain; the scattered people, gathered there, formed two dense squadrons; the 40 Spaniards, knowing that it would be better to break out, prepared to do so. Then tight-packed squadrons under the command of Lincoya moved towards them. With flutes, horns, harsh instruments, a shrill clamour and derisory yells, the proud, bloodthirsty barbarians charged against the valiant Spaniards, who hoped to turn their arrogant cries into laments: so much did strength and soul grow within them that their enemy seemed diminutive in their presence.

Then a Spaniard (so badly wounded that I could not identify him) seeing how few men were coming into the field, said "If only our squadron were 100 strong!" But an impassioned Gonzalo Hernandez turned his face to the heavens, saying "It would please God if we were only twelve and two were missing; we would all twelve earn our fame." They rallied their horses, got firmly seated in their saddles, grasped reins and charged against the barbarian hordes; brandishing their powerful lances, their blades sharpened by blood, they called in high voices to God in heaven, making the ground groan and tremble.

At that moment the Araucanians' pikes, fashioned of ash and strong as girders, were knocked down like reeds in the fury of a high wind. The enemy weapons were no match for the thrust and mobility of the Spaniards; our men broke out, wrecking the enemy squadrons. At one point the horsemen turned, throwing away their red lances. They turned on the proud enemy host, brandishing their swords on high, notwithstanding the mass of shafted points thrust against them by the furious people, with whom they could not mingle on equal terms.

Some have never known defeat; others are used to winning without having had cause to deepen their wounds. So here: they dropped their heaviest weapons, cast their harnesses to the flames; striking with speed and power they made it sound as if all the heavens had come down to earth.

* * *

The good Gonzalo Hernandez, presuming to emulate the famous man of Cordova, no less nimble and strong than he was spirited, broke through the enemy host: Penalose and Vergara, knowing that they must conquer or die, girded themselves up to make outstanding tests of their stamina and tenacity: that valiant soldier of Escalona, waving his sturdy sword, took the supreme risk of facing 1,000 valiant barbarians: Don Leonardo Manrique did not forgive the

blows he had sustained, so he doubled his efforts with great courage and even greater rage; he punished them, wounded them, drove them back.

Then another, called de Cordozo, a young man of great strength and valour, spilled so much Araucanian blood that day: he made a hundred widows. Against each one who cried to heaven for vengeance, all the others jumped for joy; so finally they were malleable women, vulnerable to change.

Cortes and Pero Nino, on their side, waged a fierce, brutal, devastating war; Moran, Gomez de Almagro and Maldonado sowed the earth with barbarian bodies: el Herrero, as a man accustomed to striking blows, and skilful at it, knocked down and killed; then Nereda too, who was a master of that art, dealt wounds and tore down, right and left.

As if prepared for death, they unsheathed their rabid swords; with so much force did they bring down brutal blows that strong weapons meant little to them; shields could not withstand them. They carried their insensitive bodies, ignited to fury, so as to be insensitive alike to blows raining on them, and to the deaths of others. Burning with fury, they struck down their enemies with mighty blows; with redoubled efforts, they made their horses kneel, and dented their harnesses, painted in relief; they opened, unfastened, broke and took off; they rolled their red pieces and sallets; the air thundered with the sound of swords.

Lincoya, fighting and striking down his enemies, fired his squadrons with fervour; the crests of those sturdy morions were no match for the mace he wielded with such strength. Cortes, striking a blow in retaliation, but his head down in the melee; he lifted up the half-dead horse and untied its bridle as it was running to the open field. With its neck bent down, dozing, the horse dragged him back and forth. But then, pulling himself together, Cortes timidly recovered the reins. He turned to look at the person who had wounded him; at the point when he recognised him, that tall Araucanian who went there had been lifted up by two men. Cortes recognised him, in the bravery that he showed, inspiring his people there, and the ease and suppleness with which he handled his mace. Just as the nimble whippet, rushing through the weeds, throws himself wildly and valiantly on the wild boar, so did Cortes assault the Araucanian and pierced his breast, hard steel in hand.

He was wounded all along one side; his tough corselet was of no avail; he was changed more by this blow than he would have been by a rock or a far heavier strike. With a strong pace he spurred on his horse and Cortes, already safe from Lincura, rode into the squadron and assailed many, right and left.

Almagro was in hand-to-hand combat with the strong young soldier Guacon; the contest had almost been decided when fate showed itself to be neutral; with one blow *Almagro* wounded the Indian, opening up the broad portal of death. A red river poured from him; cold suffused his blood-drained body. In the battle, Airado Castaneda attacked, killed, pummelled, smashed, wounded; by chance he came upon Narpo at the right, and there raised his trusty

sword; neither his jerkin of fine mail nor his breastplate could protect him from the furious point which severed his body from his spirit.

The two peoples were infuriated with each other; their courage and fervour exploded; and then there swelled the river of blood. Spanish and Araucanian intermingled; the atmosphere was smothered by their thick breath; some infernal fury had been unleashed, which in one day raised so many, to drench them with diabolical fury.

They held out so long that they were afraid to lay down their arms; on both sides there were steep piles of bodies. After sunset there were some half-hearted skirmishes, both sides equally enfeebled; they could no longer move forward. It was as if breath and strength were faltering in two intrepid bulls, persisting in a strenuous fight. They showed themselves to be of equal strength; they retreated, little by little, face to face, with lazy steps, covered with thick, heavy breath, and scattered the arena to the winds with their feet. The two armies drew back, downcast, bloodless, drained of vigour, so that the swords never showed themselves, but were always face to face. Both moved at the same tempo, and one point climbed high and diverged, so that the two sides faced each other at less than an arrow-shot's distance.

From their respective encampments they wandered round the field, back and forth, soaked in blood and mire, panting so desperately that they could scarcely breathe, exposing their tired limbs, their breasts and mouths, to the brisk wind, so that they could again take moderate breaths and mitigate the brazen heat of the sun. From there, for lack of arms, they attacked with their tongues, declaiming words of affront which promised a dramatic death. After that, lethal arrows flew forth from the enemy columns; although their breath and strength were failing them rage still pushed them forward.

I do not know whose empowered arm propelled the arrow with such impetus, like a flushed ray of light; the air was broken by noise. The arrow grazed Cordova at one point, then, deflected from its straight course, twisted towards Moran, and pierced his right eye. The good Moran, with a strong, rough hand, pulled the arrow lodged out of his eye socket; Gonzalo saw him on the hard path of death and tried to console him: "Do not think I have weakened; wounded as I am, I could take on many times the host gathered before me."

They impulsively spurred their horses, which through fatigue could not gallop, against that number of people who were formed into a squadron; but Gonzalo Hernandez diligently pushed forward so that Lincoya sallied forth, and turned on him with his mighty strength. With great bragging, noise and movement the Araucanians marched over the top of a green knoll, their flags waving in the wind.

Lautaro appeared with the first people, just like a hungry lion, seeing its prey, takes pleasure, looking here and there, fiercely roaring, shaking its bellicose neck. Lautaro, matching the Spaniards, scrambled down the steep slope – thinking to bring things to a conclusion alone if they did not abandon the country to him. He went a great distance ahead of his people: such a feat is worthy of celebration. Only 40 hung on to their hopes – red their arms, legs and heads.

4,000 victors followed: crammed together, our men strove not to show fear of such a host, because each of them wished to die with greater honour. The proud enemies cried, at the top of their voices, "Death! Death!" Lincoya's army was aroused and attacked on the other side.

The Christians spurred their horses on, beating out a space in the hollow against the rested Araucanians who proudly menace heaven and earth; with slow feet they wielded fast hands. The first skirmish was a stalemate, but Nino took on the white Arena and bathed it in a broad vein of blood. The wound crossed his body. There is some confusion about who did it. Some say that Angol was the killer, others Leocoton (which is more likely); others again say that Nino fell on the ground, to be pierced by a piece of a pike which had been broken in the melee.

Manrique also died at Lautaro's feet. 12 others broke out, clearing a path with their heavy weapons; but Ongolmo, fleet of foot, was knocked down by a blow by Nereda, a veteran warrior. Cortes fell dead from many gashes. After him Diego Garcia was laid on the ground, his breast opened up by a mortal wound; Escalona was laid low by another blow, which was certainly directed by Tucapel. The rest of the Spaniards on the way (as far as I could see at close quarters) with great energy beat the flanks of their exhausted horses, drained of their blood.

Proud Tucapel, making war on all, assaulted them audaciously, and on seeing that those two had bit the dust, he elegantly jumped over them: he bumped into Almagro; on his feet, he raised his long mace and knocked his enemy down with all the strength that he could muster. Oh that was badly tried; oh fury that arose! Oh that Great God above wanted the blow to give his head a signal, and give some juice to the horse's haunches: the blow struck Almagro with such force that he could not move, pummelled him as if he were made of soft wax. Almagro quickly took hold of the horse on one side, and threw himself down: now his destiny was on the right, now it was on the left of his path – there was the great Maldonado who, covered in blood and dust, reached the point where Tucapel struck a second blow and knocked him to the ground.

With the horseman lying on the right side of the scene of the last engagement at a distance of 40 paces or more, he went forward into the road: the barbarian roared, flaming with rage: neither an inflamed viper, nor a scorpion that had just been stepped on could have moved as fast as did that Indian with his animated gesture. The plan and the decision were changed.

Sad Maldonado turned round; he dealt a blow with all his strength, but the fast horse swerved; Tucapel furiously parried the blow and threw the heavy mace to the ground; Maldonado did not escape death. Then brave Lemolemo came to the scene with a big, strong gnarled cudgel in the style of a thick, bent oar, and dealt such a blow that the hardness of his armour did not save Maldonado, nor did his sallet full of brocade; his brains splattered out onto the ground.

At this point a huge black cloud appeared in the sky, veiling the sun with a sad and fearful darkness. Aquilon jumped up with tempestuous fury, bending the shrubs and plants, drenching them in huge, scattered raindrops; then the rain poured down more thickly. Just as the skilful drummer who, perceiving an imminent attack, makes heavy beats to alert his company, but then, hearing the point and the final signal, sounds the horrendous, bitter harmony – so did the black cloud release a sudden, violent storm. As the sky was plunged in darkness, the furious contest intensified: water, stones and rays of light were thrown like mighty bolts of lightning. The Araucanian army returned and poured out here and there; the horrendous tempest grew in intensity, striking fear into the hearts of the bravest.

Juan Gomez's luck began to turn when the sky closed over him; the shadows of the dark night for a long time worked in his favour. Fearful, he hid in a thicket until the surge of the barbarian host, greedy for Spanish blood, had passed. When the violent whirlwind had passed, seeing that he could come out undetected, he left the bushes and took the road which fear showed him to be wide open. Ascending, descending, he came to the end, covered in blood, mud and sweat, hoping to join our men when the furious flood subsided.

They were diverted from the road – then, leaving one of the houses with quiet steps, the Spaniard heard the noise getting louder. He finally met the six frightened men, who welcomed him with a low voice. At that point, he introduced himself, giving a full account of the success. With fear, they recognised that they were destined for death; each one, moved by compassion, offered to die for the others, but the spirited and skilful leader, seeing that he could not make good use of this offer, said “Don't worry about me, gentlemen; it's every man for himself.” That sounded rather lame when he rushed off along an uncertain path through the wood; worn out, he was confronted by a swarm of barbarians.

But let us keep these details for another time: since there is a comprehensive history of Chile and Peru, where anyone who wants to know can look up the full details. This was written in Latin by the Chronicler Estrella, with such erudition that his memory deserves to last forever; he has also written on the life of Emperor Charles V – and in verse sung the praises of illustrious men in the military and in law, in letters and government.

I now turn to those six soldiers who showed their feelings about the plight of Almagro: being unable to help him, they headed for the Imperial city. The furious tempest went on growing; the lightning and thunder did not abate until the sun rose, and the bright day revealed to them the square of Puren. This was a fort which Juan Gomez had previously maintained with a small garrison. One night it was surrounded by a barbarian host. Gomez gallantly repelled them; through his efforts the siege was raised. I will not describe this battle (though it was a famous one) in order to avoid delay with my narrative.

When the soldiers arrived there, they were received with great affection; their dear friends were astonished to see them in such straits – wretched, afflicted, ashen, weak, hoarse, dishevelled, emaciated, swathed in blood and mud, sans sallets, their weapons and flesh

destroyed. For almost 24 hours they had defended their sector, taking no respite. This is what I have said, sir: for a while they rested in the castle from which they had set forth the night before, with no little fear for its inmates – and more when they got to know what had happened.

An icy fear froze their blood, causing great disturbance to them all, then they learned the wretched story of Valdivia. Seeing that the fort was badly prepared, and considering the strength of the enemy, they agreed unanimously to abandon it on the same day. They travelled towards Cauten, by chance crossing the path of Almagro who, marching through the night to avoid detection, stumbled on Lautaro's camp. His force was decimated; soon the barbarian host came, destroying the munitions and food which had been gathered in the castle.

The bloodthirsty barbarians surged forth, their loud noise and shouting resonating through the cavernous mountains, and across those spacious meadows, they invented such songs and games to celebrate that day's victory that fatigue took them over.

When they were joined together, the general, in a brave manner, received them cordially; availing himself of his rights with Lautaro, his lieutenant, he delivered an elite squadron, specially selected, elegant, proficient in arms – for the great enterprise of that memorable day.

Let us now turn from Lautaro (though he commands so much of my attention) and concentrate on Penco: this is necessary to substantiate the description of the sanguinary war being pursued, and the just sentiments which it elicited. Fame, nimble courier of sad news and sorrow, tormented Penco hourly, forcing despicable signals through his voice.

When the Indians arrived at an awkward time, the two who had hidden in the brambles and seen Valdivia bloodstained told the sad story. Learning through the messengers of this dire, pitiful occurrence, old men, women and children joined in a general lamentation; the sky was broken by their shrill voices, the wind filled with their sorrows. New widows, orphans and damsels were bonded by a common woe. Their white faces, more beautiful than flowers, showed snowy breasts and smooth necks soaked in blood and live tears; red in a thousand places they threw up rich robes, jewels and wigs.

No less intensely, the young ones of the state proclaimed their grief – but in a different way: they wielded arms, brandished munitions. The new equipment of the people and the raucous trumpets of Mars made a universal call to arms: some sharpened blunt swords, others polished rusty breastplates, others stitched up old tabards, or made old irons into spears, mounted their refurbished cannons, hoisted their flags to the winds, and with a show of arrogance, the soldiers occupied all the key points.

The commander of the forces was Francisco Villagran, a man trusted for his military experience, a person of the greatest diligence. He was a lieutenant of Pedro Valdivia, and

acted in his name – feeling strongly that a blow should be struck in vengeance for Valdivia's death.

The women yelled again, filling the concave height of the sky, seeing the danger their husbands were in – and themselves in such travail and frustration, with tearful eyes and groans. Kneeling on the ground, they put the young children in their path, but that was not enough to move them.

Then, with the necessary equipment, armed with bright harnesses which could be seen from afar, the men went forth to face the barbarians. The women, on towers and roofs, watched them with fixed, tender eyes; they put out 1,000 blessings, prayers and petitions to God. Then, feeling themselves surrounded by the bustle, they rushed forth into the throng to accompany their men; in search of the Araucanian army, they spurred on their horses at top speed. They reached Mareguano on the left, and on the right the vassals of Talca, son of Tacaguana, whose territories skirted the sea and the mountains.

Passing beyond the safe limits, they ventured into the narrow arena of Andalican. Crossing the spacious plain, they climbed the hills noiselessly. They reached the foot of the Andalican hills without understanding what Lautaro had ordered; only the fear of entering his territory dampened their mounting fury. A treacherous pass, dire and narrow, forms the entrance to the north side through sheer mountains with peaks touching the sky; a short distance through this lies a spacious plain, and further on a smaller one formed the border between the Andalican district and the fertile valley of Araucana.

Lautaro had chosen this piece of coastline to give battle; according to plan all his army was spread out at its highest and most exposed points – seeing that being on foot on a plain is a disadvantage when it comes to pursuing horses – the high hill was available, to he thought it would be good for his men to take a breather. Because he was so shrewd in picking this site, I would now like to describe it in detail: its steep incline is not far from the road, but the rest of it is a sheer cliff, reaching down to Poniente, by the fierce sea which beats against the foot of a great precipice, and where the highest peak is just a bowshot from the coastline.

The high ground was crowned by the powerful enemy – the entry path deserted, as I have said, without obstacles or hindrance. Having passed the first mountain they reached the foot of the second ridge. But here Villagran stopped, confused by the perilous situation. *Just as Julius Caesar, feeling suspicious when he was at the bank of the Rubicon, thinking again of the dangerous course he was taking and the great day's ordeal, vigorously took the reins, saying Take heed; the die is cast!* So did our Spaniard break his journey, and give free rein to his destiny.

Scarcely had he taken his first step when he began his bold ascent up the sheer mountain side. From a distance, Lautaro, motionless, watched them – clearly visible at the entrance; he had at his command 10,000 men, all well seasoned in the art of war. He kept his camp at the turn

of the coast, and ordered that no one should move one step to commence the hard battle, until the signal for the attack was sounded; an irrevocable punishment would be dealt to anyone who rushed forward out of line. They stood there, still and silent, as if they had been mutated into marble.

Then the Spanish, wanting to be the skilful conquerors, started to surround the enemy, going first to the left-hand side of the barbarian concentration. Having come to his set moment, Lautaro called for battle in style, with a raucous fanfare of trumpets, cornets, hooters and drums.

It seems to me, sir, good to conclude the Canto at this point because I now feel the desire to describe other things (I am getting tired of this narrative). I hope the delay does not distress you. Considering that I saw things step by step and that some of the people have major grievances, I must not now raise a prolix pen.

Canto V

(This describes the hard-fought battle between the Spanish and the Araucanians on the border of Andalican: there, because of the astuteness of Lautaro and the increasing difficulties of the Spaniards, our people were defeated and more than half of them killed, along with 3,000 friendly Indians.)

In his clemency, our benign God always holds back from meting out deserved punishment until he is assured that the hard, arrogant hearts of those who defy him have not mellowed, and that there remains the ruinous carelessness whose aftermath we observe. For example, when we see our neighbours getting devastated, we surely want to avoid that fate for ourselves.

I must say that because we Spaniards were so happy with our prowess, we did not bother to avenge the fate of Valdivia; nor did we want to follow in his footsteps: soon you will read a detailed account of atrocities past and present which the ferocious Lautaro, his breast seething, perpetrated in this land.

Villagran halted his expedition in the narrow plain; he set up six cannons in position, and directed operations. For a while he stayed fast in this position to sound out the plans of Lautaro, whose forces covered such an expanse as to damp the ardour of many a breast.

This war was desired by many, but God above knew his intentions; the entire plain was covered by men in concentrated squadrons: their blood, already frozen by fear, took heed of their hearts; their limbs, abandoned by heat, were sluggish to move. They roared with the fire of renewed outrage, because the starting trumpet had not sounded; they were so keen for crisis and battle that any delay was painful to them. On the other side the Araucanian band, subject to their chieftain's orders, raged to close in combat; but obedience put a powerful brake on them.

Just like a fierce horse, which when a competitor draws close to it, snorts, whinnies, and with a proud posture scuffs the earth with one foot and then another – so did the obedient Araucanian army, encircling the castle, roar to see the contest commence; but the set signal had not been given.

In this way, both sides were aching to join battle; but Villagran thought it more courageous to hold back: there were three bands of horsemen separated from those avid to prove themselves. At the signal, they spurred on their horses without more self-reproof. The field, beating with nimble feet, was seasoned with great confusion and movement. It shook with horrendous, raucous sound; the tide of motion was mind-boggling.

The well-drilled barbarians were desperate to wreak wounds, but fearing the wrath of Lautaro did not move a single step forward. Just as Castilians, at a stately banquet, undo packs of

canes, and making the individual sticks revolve upon their chests: so our men, firm in their saddles, remained until the end of the sally, then turned to withdraw, so as to be unable to brake without hurling themselves forward?

They drew back in the form of a wide arc, by this means making many circuits. But each time they did so a thick hail of arrows, darts and stones came at them; neither stout shields nor sallets afforded them any protection. They could not engage at close quarters in order to regain the high hill.

Tireless, Lautaro stood firm and surrounded the hills with his men. With his permission, some went to the country to spread the news; they wanted one-to-one combat against the Spaniards with pikes and batons; or two-to-two, or three-to-three soldiers, according to the free choice of those selected. Making sweeping gestures, they strutted gallantly; more bizarre than brave Germans, they stepped gently here and there, swaying their hips. Like true nimble gallants well versed in jousting, the brave men came to join in combat and to try their hard points.

Whoever considered himself to be a master of the pike went forth to prove his strength and destiny, trying the left hand and right hand side, looking for the best with sound judgement. Whoever quickly attacks, conquers and plunders, finding his path wide open strikes blind blows, sure of dealing death to his enemy.

Some never cure themselves of such posturings; nor do they mellow to gentleness. They only try to make their blows mortal and make the bodies and feet rigid. With spirit they throw themselves into the fray, aroused by fury and courage; sometimes their blows are struck in vain, and once again they wield their hands.

But young Curioman proved himself to be faster in that race: undaunted, he made a long run. Showing the greatest boldness he brandished a trusty lance threw himself into the fray, so fast that no crossbow bolt fired from the fortress could catch him. He had already wounded seven Spaniards, but nobody dared to attempt vengeance on that fearful, valiant barbarian with his determination, dexterity and mighty strength: here Villagran came running, threw the eighth lance, and with an animated voice, cried “Won’t anyone punish this brazen devil?”

Saying this, he looked at Diego Cano whom he revered for his courage. With a spear in his right hand he perceived his precious quarry, and when the vigorous barbarian shook his arm with extreme force he nailed his thighs down to the ground, and wounded the horse on both sides. With a little confusion and a lot of noise he confidently mounted the swift horse and rode it towards the gallant foe who had turned a sword on him; but the strong Spaniard, drunk with a thirst for revenge, broke down the obstacle and spurred his horse on towards the enemy squadrons.

Neither the proud Araucanian assembly, with its thick pikes lunging down, nor the vigorous, rich movement of maces and barbarian swords could resist the hard intent of a Spaniard who,

once aroused, hounded the trail of the nimble Indian's footsteps, crashing through the dense multitude. With great effort and a valiant hand he broke through the mass of obstacles and put his lance in the breast of the one who prolonged his death in vain. With a lofty gesture he spurred on the horse with his right hand, with strength and agility carving a path through the enemy's midst.

Then the cavalry lunged at the Araucanian army – which seemed ready to attack, but then withdrew to the edge of the battlefield. Once, four times, ten times we attacked, to little effect; no sword was then stained with barbarian blood. The tired horses toiled on, but their efforts were to little avail; wounded and harassed by arrows, our men spurred them on in vain: the courage of some subsided, reaching that impasse (narrow point); they were tired, the others were relaxed and alive, the paths and roads were closed.

The fearsome artillery opened up with full fury and thus pummelled the Indian squadron, levelling that upright mass to the ground: the hill was covered in fire and smoke; the air resounded far and near. The ground seemed to open up with a clamour and a new Mongibelo to breathe.

Lautaro thought it right to disperse that storm cloud which had glowered upon his people and destroyed a great part of them: he ordered the squadron, which he had entrusted to the gallant Leucoton, for bravery, to attack with fury. And in a high voice he warned them:

“Oh faithful, victorious comrades: now Fortune calls you to your destiny. Now is the time for intrepid arms to vindicate our just causes. Come on; drench your warring spears, let your weapons break the enemy breasts, and open up a torrent of red without respect to friend or kindred! Be guides to the places which were won by your efforts; your swords gain lasting fame through such victories; their memory shall be eternal; the camp will follow your footsteps, you being the authors of this glory.”

And so the people, their pride aroused, made the daring attack. To his shame he was the last one there, which was noticed by the others. The most fearful always want to be first to prove that a lance can pierce a wooden cask. They do not fear to see their comrades dying, nor to juggle 15 to 20 balls, throwing the pieces through the air, nor to face bodies without heads. It does not disturb or embarrass them, nor does it keep them blinded by fear, before one raises his arm, and wields his sword, against the other. Without having made amends they arrive at the bank, where the fire machine was placed; there they saw cannon balls spitting out, stopped by barbarian fury.

The others attacked in a circle, and covered the ground with blows; the pen is inadequate, nor is there any tongue which could portray the fury with which they came: with all the voices, fire, smoke and dust they could not hear or recognize anyone, but this barrier made no difference as they blindly grappled in hand-to-hand combat.

They held back for a short while to regroup, the enemy already intermingled with them; what was most clearly visible there was the clashing of swords; there could be seen in vast quantities of severed heads and sallets, masses of feet chopped off their legs.

Some attached in a furious rush, to defend the artillery; others, to bring the fight to an end; they joined battle with the odds vastly against them; fifty Araucanians to every Spaniard. They did not want to bear the standard of the great and glorious Charles V in retreat; in spite of the host opposed to them, they pressed on, victorious: it was terrible and proud. Every action, turned into anger and bloodstained dust, gave a new lease of life to their swords, exhausted by so much combat.

Their fury and bravery were renewed, following and catalyzed by their wounds, with the same single-minded determination with which they had started. The full extent of the deaths, rigour and horrors cannot be accurately described but the thick, abundant grass lost its colour, drenched red with blood.

Villagran sustained the fight with such intensity that he did not lose an inch of ground; he prepared for all eventualities, bustling back and forth; turning rapidly. He acted in the manner of a captain rich in experience; like a veteran soldier and a good warrior he threw himself into danger at the head of his men.

Turning in blood he realized that Torbo had inflicted many casualties on the Christians. He mounted his horse, and having done so, seized his lance in his right hand, and rode firmly in the stirrups. But his fighting spirit was greater than his strength, and deflected his speedy hand, making his blow premature, and in vain.

Unhorsed by the enemy host, the fiery Spaniard turned to Torbo and sheltered the jennet under his arm; a savage blow penetrated his reinforced breastplate and cotton jerkin, making a deep wound in his stomach, turning the ground into a lake of blood.

He pulled the lance right back, and balancing it behind his arm, hurled it in anger; furiously he turned the lance grinding with the force and power that he wielded. And with Corpillan, who was relaxing, he passed between the arm and the body and penetrated to the ground without inflicting any wounds, wanting the body fixed between his arms.

And then Villagran, his sword far away, made a wide, fast run in the middle of the host. No less did Pedro de Olmost de Aguilera cross all the areas of danger, having with his own hand put to death Guancho, Canio, Pillo and Titaguano. Hernando and Juan, both from Alvarado, gave a distinguished demonstration of their valour, and turned the great old jennet Maldonado with a dexterous hand, wielding with experienced courage the swords with which they were masters of inflicting wounds, although his enfeebled, aged strength weakened the blow and the wound.

With his two bare hands and no shield, Diego Cano left not a single lance or suit of armour

intact. Everything with a sharp edge made pieces fall on the plain: then Pena, although his tongue was stammering, conducting himself with ease, as did Cesio in the arms of Pompey, or the proud son of Peleo in Troy.

On the other side the Spaniard Reinoso, seething with venomous wrath, rampaged furiously with his bloodstained sword, inflicting wounds right and left; he killed Palta with one blow and vigorously turned his blade on the side of the powerful Ron, opening the vein which drenched his sword in blood.

Bernal, Pedro de Aguayo, Castaneda, Ruiz, Gonzalo Hernandez and Pantoja had a wheel (full circle) of dead bodies around them, and the ground was red with blood; none of them could gain a foothold on the battlefield, nor inflict more wounds with their blunted points, the Christians doing such things as made those times miraculous. The numbers set against them were so great, and the margin of hope so small that their blood, breath, and strength failed them. They carried on. Then at the end of the line, unable to resist the great wave beating against them, they lost a large stretch of the mountain area as well as all six pieces of their artillery.

As ever, our men fought on, unflinching in their good old-fashioned courage; there was no sign of wavering in the Spaniards before they reached the camp site. But having come to that pass where they were faced by more than five squadrons, they began to doubt the outcome of the battle, to despair of winning. Their doubts were roused when they saw the enemy so strong, felt the great wave beating against them, and their own strength ebbing; the wounds and congealing blood put the fear of death into them; some were so demoralised that they turned away from the path, not wrecked by death, sir, but putting on a brave face, and well-ordered.

But good Villagran, gathering strength, threw himself into the fray with fury, strengthening himself with shrewd reasoning, as if chastised by a captain, saying: "Gentlemen, do not veer away from what honour obliges you to do; do not deliver us into fear, I tell you, for that is our greatest enemy. If you waver now, then dishonour and disgrace will stain you forever: know that infamous fear, dumb and blind, is more of a menace to us than is a hard enemy; don't panic, keep calm, so that in this crisis you can keep your reputation, honour, life and property, something which hereafter cannot be changed? If we move without order or feeling, our steps will be impeded (we will stop dead in our tracks) With what disgrace and abasement will we face our comrades? Life and honour lie in victory; death and dishonour in defeat."

From the square they did not gain anything. That and other things followed from the extraordinary fear which the danger had induced in them. "Where can I do better than what I can do here?" so saying, Villagran launched a desperate attack against a mighty host, only to meet an honourable death.

Life offered him a comfortable exit, without undergoing the rigours of judgement; he feared

an affront more than he feared death, and gave two fingers to the latter. I do not want to go into all the details of the swordplay now, but I do want to give fair coverage of the pain and stigma suffered by a man whose honour is in dispute.

When he had emerged, he was found on the ground, thrown from his horse, stunned; they found him struck down, mutilated, but his arms had stood him in good stead. Others shouted “disarm him!” There one could hear the clamouring people . . . *but whoever wants to hear the rest of the story, I beg you to go on to the next Canto.*

Canto VI

(The battle continues with the atrocities which the Araucanians perpetrate upon the conquered, the callousness with which they treat the women and children, putting them to the knife.)

Generally, neither fate nor a drastic turn of fortune can present a situation so dire as to disgrace a brave spirit. But that is what happened to *Villagran* who, otherwise powerless, thought he could, through his own death, block the bitter path along which destiny was dragging him.

Speeding up their steps, his soldiers found themselves in a confused heap. As they came to they saw their good captain on the ground. Just thirteen of them, despairing for their lives, tore at the flanks of their horses and threw themselves into attacking thousands of their enemies. With greater valour than I could ever describe the tiny squadron closed ranks, opening up a pathway through the enemy which almost won them the battle. They pushed through to their wretched leader, lying on the ground, stunned by blows; helpless and abandoned by Fortune, surrounded by the hostile horde. Each one of them wanted to be first in this capture and signal act of destiny; they were like ravenous wolves descending on mild sheep. Desperate voices in tones of humility made discordant music; then the pack of mastiffs rushed to the source of this noise.

* * *

And so the tightly-packed enemy trapped the sad Villagran in their midst; so eager were they to deal death that they got in each other's way. But the thirteen brave Spaniards broke the trap and survived, covered in the fresh red blood of the dead lying behind them. With great speed, moved by love, they hurled themselves forward to defend Villagran; their bold, sharp points were drenched in fresh blood. The wounded abandoned the circle and fled in all directions; some were blessed by better luck and held their ground until they perished. As one dense throng was dispersed, chastised and abandoned the field, another cluster was formed, and the empty space re-filled. Nobody aroused Villagran from his sleep; but his soldiers showed great skill, flexing their arms so swiftly, that they mounted him on a horse.

It would have been fatal to delay any longer, and they were poorly prepared to save him from that: although he was well covered in armour, his body was worn out and bruised. But then he suddenly awoke; the Spaniards came to his side. Forgetting the danger in which they all stood, they flung themselves amidst the clusters of enemy weapons.

In the midst of the enemy host – cracked neither by punishment nor by fear, rising to his defence as loyal comrades, they wrought havoc on the barbarians – thrashing, demolishing, dealing such punishment that the traces and memories of those ravages still linger on in Arauco.

Bernal made a direct frontal attack on Mailongo, whose armour was of no avail. The blades hacked through to his breast. Aguilera lunged with his sword and left the handsome Guanán prostrate, wounded – the fear he struck into the enemy's hearts cleared a wide path along which he could ride at full rein.

Then the fourteen victors left the rest of their band who, orderless and panicking, turned round to witness his death. Villagran and the others who arrived could not block the path which had been opened up – and which fear had already reinforced. The Araucanians came, brave and strong; the Spaniards doubted that they could prevail against such numbers. Their horses were breathless, worn out to no purpose by those importunate spurs. Loudly they cried "To the plain! We will not be cornered in this way!" With renewed fear and exasperation they took to the road again.

Just as when a herd of wild goats, restricted to a confined space, surrounded by skilful hunters and chased by importunate shots, becomes outraged and desperate, one breaks the path and escapes, and the others follow – so did our men open up the escape route.

One, two, ten and twenty – intractable, ran down the slope to the coast. They were in panic, with no sense of direction as if they were placed above a canopy – though some brave men with firm faces and swords at the ready, fought spiritedly, not seeing their friends leaving them. They did not notice the flight, nor were they prepared for such a weak and cowardly remedy, bringing an end to a doubtful term. With heroic souls they held off the furious assaults from the Indians, and the disposition of cruel Fate was manifest in the damage. And so they resisted, killed and destroyed. In contrast with apparent destiny, it appeared that the Araucanian courage was shrinking, while theirs, through this gruelling test, was growing. But as the comrades escaped, separating from the people as they ran faster, they followed the lead of madness – not that of courage.

I want to change this song into bitter tears, which will be most appropriate to the season. Then I will sound in your ears the laments of the innocent, friendly people. Not feeling themselves to be conquered, they put to the sword girls, women and servants whose cries pierced the heavens.

The Spanish Infantry and their retainers promptly took to the road; fear lent lightness to their steps, and had took a growing hold on them; then clumsy, panic-stricken, many of them went out of their senses; some turned round, their loins broken, others threw hacked-off pieces around. A thousand remained stretched out on the road; streams of blood irrigated the plain. The air was riven by their complaints and yells, their pitiful groans from their humiliation, which

reached the sky. Their hands on high they begged in vain for the cruel barbarians to spare their lives.

The latter kept pursuing them, with swift hands and nimble feet, wounding and knocking down, indiscriminately, the helpless people – wretched, crippled, who in friendship, begged in vain to a friendly nation for help. They made excuses because of doubt, interest and obligation. And although reason guided them to rise to their allies' defence, it was more practical to bide their time. They did not consider them as friends, nor did they feel any sense of obligation to those with whom they apparently had close bonds. They shouted, cried and groaned aplenty. Our men stopped at nothing, for the flow of red blood gave new fury to their path, already mounted and tugging at the reins. Neither the voice of a tender maiden, nor their obligations to friends grieved them. The pain and exhaustion that they bore was because their horses could not fly.

Deaf to that clamour and hardened, they took to the green plain, fleet of foot. Some were moved to pity, others aroused to rabid fury. Seeing the wild, inhuman spectacle before them, they turned against the Araucanian army which was swarming over the field and took the greater part of them prisoner. Determined to die, they returned, making an approach to the women, and stumbled by chance on the barbarians, which cost them ten times as dearly. The vanguard did not turn back – they wanted the path of their departure to be clearer, and avoid risking their lives; the land far away from them was secure.

The struggle was renewed, swinging regularly from one side to the other; breast clinched with breast, lance with lance, sword with sword; the Spaniards could hold their own against the Araucanian host pouring out before them; the enemy surged on, without order, doing all the damage that they could. *Just as a scattered flock of crows spread their wings to take flight with the sympathy of their mates, and hear the trap through their screeching, their beating wings folded to help them make a circular descent* – so did the barbarian squadrons straighten their path in response to the din.

The tumultuous throng surged back and forth, making the air thick with dust. They rushed on together in confusion, to the sonorous ringing of swords; each Araucanian rushed up to where the situation was most favourable; with their bloodstained weapons in their hands, they surrounded the Christian squadron. With the barbarian presence growing, the clashing of weapons grew and the skirmishing intensified. Our numbers were dwindling because no-one could come to their aid. But through fighting with magnificent vigour, none were lost from the band of a hundred, nor could any Spaniard be seen in the least to falter. Through the power of destiny, as if at Heaven's command, they preserved their lives, conducted themselves without fear of the lethal weapons arrayed against them. They fell to the earth and jumped to the sky, giving and taking severe wounds, so that the huge disparity in numbers eventually prevailed over courage and spirit. So the Spaniards stood in opposition, fearing neither death nor the importunate fury of the barbarians, withstanding the assaults from that potent people – resisting Fate and Fortune.

But they could not go on indefinitely without reinforcements; as their own casualties were mounting, it was inevitable that they should return to their laborious path. The hope that the vanguard could move like the wind seemed well-founded; it suited them to use that expedient rather than rash audacity. Many died in the middle of the path, through loss of horses and through exhaustion; the green plain was awash with a trail of red blood. As the horses were tired and drooping, the Barbarian foot soldiers caught up with the Spaniards; they dragged down the dispirited riders and turned their weapons on them. Others were obstructed by the peons – the Christian train who went on foot. The weary peons could not move at a trot when frozen by fear; they were contented to grasp the trains or reins. Their pitiful, futile condition recalled close friendships long forgotten. The ones on horseback separated themselves from the walkers; if they could not answer the request, they would be wounded as badly as the most hated enemies: *that season was not a time of friendship*.

The mighty hubbub deafened the whole valley; there could be heard the clash of weapons, the sad cries of the Spanish soldiers and of their retinue who perished at the hands of the Araucanians. There never was seen such bloody sacrifice, such strange and crude anatomy as the proud barbarians inflicted on those 2,500 who died there. Some fell to the ground, badly wounded, slashed from loins to stomach; others had split foreheads; others, again, with honour, were decapitated; others who were half-gone had their eyes wrenched from their sockets. They were forced to run the gauntlet of perilous rocks without getting knocked down.

They paid no respect to the sad, delicate women before ruthlessly putting them to the sword, without hearing their pleas; nor did they have any scruples about the pregnant – just aimed blows at their bellies. Scattered among the wounded were unborn children. They climbed the great slope as much as they could; they rewarded the lazy and the negligent by not allowing them to live any longer – by dispatching them they could travel more lightly. It was obvious that the clumsy people who remained were not good at keeping up their speed; death, tramping irately behind them, shook their feet. But though the slope was rough and steep many of them reached its summit. There they found a fully-built watchtower. There was only one worn-out track leading to it, which almost sliced the hill like a lathe; on one side the sea beat it, on the other it was hemmed in by a great craggy rock. Their path was blocked: a new wall had been rapidly built of big, rough-hewn tree trunks, skilfully interwoven. Within this compound were the Indians, well prepared for battle; jutting over the walls, they showed themselves proudly to the skies, fearless of mortal enemies.

The Spaniards, on arrival, closed ranks and froze their hopes – resolved to conquer or die: turning a little away from the watchtower, they tested the strength of their horses and struck a blow to break in. The barbarians opposed them. So our men were halted in their tracks; all their efforts seemed in vain. Then came Villagran; seeing that the attack had been thwarted, and how futile was the attempted remedy, he showed no fear of dying, but gave the last round

to Fortune. There was a horse, bred from powerful Spanish stock, a chestnut of mighty strength and furious energy, spirited, fast in running and breathing, broad in build. It was well trained, its fury controlled and corrected by a weak bit and a soft bridle. Its face straightened, and at that moment the fast Spaniard beat its flank; there were no qualms about breaking it in, as was customary. It opened up a path, along which passed all those who had escaped from below. The irate barbarians struggled to defend the path, but finally to no avail. However hard they fought the powerful Spaniards broke them up; some took the right path; others did not know this good road, and took a bad turning – to the left, which led to a mighty precipice. On the left-hand side there were two badly rutted tracks – some say these were formerly used by the deer to get to the water. But recently they had collapsed, *shattered into myriad fragments by a 120 foot earthquake.*

Some freak of nature, the great aridity of this land, or some tempestuous flood was the cause of this rift in the terrain. Obsessed by war, howling for death, the unruly people senselessly lurched towards it. The unseen people went rolling, so there was no halting their motions. The second one lurched into the first, the third into the second, and so on. The numbers went on multiplying. One body was cut into a thousand pieces. They all rolled on in violent fury until they reached the bottom. Like the proud Tifeo, presuming to throw his enemies down the great mountainside, and the heaviness when the terrible trembling body shook the crags of the summit which disintegrated with a mighty uproar and made a mass of fragments below – so the people, cruelly driven, were torn to pieces as they rolled into the plain.

But those that held the good road could see that the end was within reach. Nobody lingered on the other path; to do so would have been madness. They agreed to roll in a way that speeded things up as much as possible, on foot and on horseback. Each one hit the bottom in small pieces; the horses trotted freely over the field where the men had fallen dead; others were forced down to the ground because they had lost their saddles; they could not find their stirrups and so the horses ran off. Others, again, did not wait for this to happen but dug in their heels to ride; they went forward without anyone seeming to understand that they could not reach their destination with just two pulls at the reins.

They took a vote and made promises among themselves – of fasting, pilgrimages, orations, and other ceremonies reserved solely for the Pope, if God would lead them out of this danger. The horses thundered across the plain, their tails fearsomely waving, wanting to get stronger, but in vain. They also dilated their firm flanks. One brother does not hear the other. Pity is justified there; whoever gets two paces ahead of the other struggled and dies to gain a further two. *It is like someone dreaming of being in a bull ring, and senses the furious bull approaching. The terrified bull thinks of escaping from that attack, and desperately tries to break into a run but, paralysed by fear, cannot move – though spurred and goaded, desperate to do so.*

The enemy followed its advance, making great slaughter and inflicting massive casualties as it. A good horse achieves much, when he surges onward in fury. He who abandons his shield,

his lance finally forsakes his own body through exhaustion. So did the brave conquerors slake their thirst for blood. For those who lagged behind in this disaster, no-one (not even their friends), came to their aid. The lightest-laden moved on, at the pace of a horse's trot; thirst and exhaustion afflicted them. But God, who intervenes at times of the greatest danger, stemmed the enemy attack – *as I shall describe in the following canto*.

Canto VII

(In tatters the Spanish reach the city of Concepcion; they tell of the destruction and of our losses. Seeing how little resistance can be made in the city against so powerful an enemy force – in view of the many women, children and old people there, they retire to Santiago. This canto also describes the sacking and destruction of Concepcion City.)

Many fears are lodged in our hearts – which could deflect us from an honourable death into an infamous and disgraceful life. In times of great danger boldness merits the highest esteem. Fear is natural for the prudent; knowing how to conquer it is a sign of true courage. Those who spurred and goaded their tired horses can lay claim to this: they were so terrified that we must give them due credit for keeping quiet about it; they declared their state of mind by wild gestures with feet, arms and flanks. The Araucanians too, were breathless – lost in and galvanized by fury.

Those exhausted by toil slackened off in the long, rapid run – panting from their strenuous efforts, they went six leagues ahead. Our men, goaded more by fear, reached the far bank of Biobio by nightfall, when they lost their sense of direction. At the bank they saw a big boat moored by a heavy chain to a tall pine tree. The most seriously wounded were put in the boat: a path to the water was opened up; the others waited patiently until the next, hoped-for, boat came and then set off with diligence; they reached their destination city.

You can imagine how they arrived, ravaged by toil and wounds. Some were almost faceless; others were swollen with bruises, looking as if they had crawled out of the inferno. They spoke not a word but turned their eyes to everyone, proclaiming the devastation through their silence. After their fatigue and panic had worn off a little, they could tell the astonished people what had happened. There erupted cries of lament, which further solemnized the great disaster; the nearest house replied to its discord in bitter harmony. Some wept for their fathers, some their husbands, some their sons, nephews, brothers; women, as if deprived of reason, desperately wrung their beautiful hands; with this new grief, the moans grew, as did the vain protests against chance; the tearful boys in their mothers' arms cried out for their fathers.

They ran from house to house, describing in shrill voices the slain who went down fighting, and those wretched souls thrown over the cliffs – children, spouses, widows, lamenting, raising their hands and eyes, praying to God, in such dire grief about the final resolution of death. They spent the bitter night sleepless, to the mournful sound of instruments. When daybreak came they stopped and continued their laments, saying that the bloodthirsty Araucanians were approaching in great fury, steel in one hand, fire in the other, lurching upon the Spanish, who were blinded by fear. The proclamation of such fame loosened rough and clumsy tongues, boosting the cause of Lautaro and dampening his enemy's spirits. This left every Spaniard trembling, gave force to fame, lifted the weakest Araucanian soul to the sky, pouring ice on Spanish souls.

There rose the sound of retreat, and the sad city was abandoned; the people said that they could not sustain resistance. Small clusters began to form; the common voice, the general will, approved the exodus. Some disapproved, arguing that there was no reason to leave. Two factions arose – one of fear, and one of love of the estate. The smaller people pleaded that the city could not be defended; having got their estates and fortunes, they grabbed the reins of free terror. But the latter struggled on, growing in confidence to become fully self-possessed.

The leaders gave a strong impression of abandoning the people and their own nests. The fearful crowd did not understand, but kept attentive ears to the noise. The leaders observed the movements of the crowd without noticing that it suddenly changed and stirred. The complaints and quarrels came back in force, raising a howl to the stars.

Some went running to their houses proclaiming the approach of the barbarian warriors; many were goaded into the saddle, trying to seize the fastest horses. The locked-up girls, astounded, ran crying through the streets, without cloaks or escorts, searching for their needy mothers.

Like fearful lambs who had lost their dear ewes, lamenting their catastrophic bereavements, making a thousand paces within a small area, lending an attentive ear to everything, foolishly running hither and thither, so did the weeping, tender girls bewail their fate.

From time to time the laments, the affliction, the howls were renewed and grew; but then such voices were suddenly silenced, making external sounds audible again. In every shadow, Lautaro appeared to them, his powerful voice resounding; the people raised their voices and ran, unable to see the others who were running. It was pitiful to hear the shouts, sighs and complaints, amplified as fear scattered them to the winds.

The terrified people abandoned their houses, possessions and estates, silks, carpets, beds, embroidery, cloths braided with gold and silver – if anyone protested, saying that the city should not be abandoned, the Principal replied: “I didn’t hear you; nor does my will count for anything”. But an old man, casting fear aside, cried out: “Vile people! Cowards, traitors to the honour and the very being of Spain. What is it? Where do you go? Who deceives you?” But neither this admonishment, nor anything else the old man said did any good; in spite of him, they all went running for their lives.

It is right that fame should honour a deed worthy of celebration until the day when memory ceases to flow from the pen, loses its being and is completed. Donna Mencía de Nidos, a lady noble, discreet and courageous was one who achieved great fame at a time denied to men; sick and weak, largely housebound – she took a sword and shield, and sallied forth among her neighbours the best she could. Having reached the top of the mountain, turning back from the afflicted faces to the houses and lands which they were leaving, hearing the squawks of 1,000 chickens: the cats yowled with horrid voices, the dogs gave tristful barks. The distressed Philomena showed great pain.

But with a clear demonstration of still greater grief Donna Mencía stopped her with an unsheathed sword, and in their midst, on the coast, her back turned on the city, said: “Oh Valiant nation! How can the esteem gained by the rigour and edge of the sword decline so? Tell me, what is the strength of your enemies, that you should be so afraid of them? What is that high point of grandeur and immortality to which you aspire? Where is that tenacity, pride and natural valour of which you boast? Where are you going, worried about your men who are not appearing through our ranks?”

“How many times did you show yourselves to be impatient, conceited, foolhardy – throwing yourselves into peril without proper preparation: you saw us bring such masses of the enemy, tamed, under our yoke; you saw us undertake – and complete – enterprises which you say should be treated as immortal. Turn with eyes of compassion towards your people, raised up by you from their foundations; look at the fertile fields which have their tribute prepared for you; the rich mines, the rivers abounding in gold dust, and the livestock wandering from hill to hill, looking for its unknown shepherd.

“Think of the animals who lack your power of reason; take solace from exercising this power, show sad sentiments. Then hard hearts, unused to showing feeling, are softened; the animals spread this great tragedy to the winds, and condemn us almost with an articulate voice.

“You leave peace, property and the virtuous life – acquired through your efforts and muscle – to go to bitter adversity, pastures new where you will get a wretched reception. What can be more disgraceful than to be guests all our lives? Turn now, so that an honourable life is accorded to the worthy – or else bring on death! Turn back; do not leave in this way; do not be friends to fear; let me make the first offer to hurl myself in front of the enemy weapons: I shall verify my words, and you will be my witnesses. “Turn, turn!” she cried, but in vain; her advice did not seem sound to anyone.

Just as a worthy, prudent father, who thinks he can calm down a spoilt child by using his powers of persuasion – confronts his incorrigible, obstinate brat and preaches his sermon – so the people, having succumbed to fear, rejected her counsel. Nor could Paul, taking his path so fast through the temples of the Jaculo serpent, escape from getting bogged down; they carried their lives conjointly like the malicious talk and inclemency of the Lady of Nidos – it just went in one ear and out the other.

Without hearing the chat they all walked on according to their whims: women without leggings dragged their skirts through the mud. They went on like this for 12 days, and finally reached Mapocho. Lautaro, who had a burst of energy, now gave a prize, which caused me much delay. It is not good for us to overlook this, since it does not detract from the damage we suffered: *where we will now turn our eyes was then beyond our reach.*

I have opted for brevity, and will summarise this huge body of events in just a few words – to describe this in full detail would require a comprehensive history; I will cover the details of the past as best I can. I beg you to lend me an ear; what I have to tell is a dire story worthy of

your attention, so that I can describe the deeds of those barbarians with a fluent and observant pen.

When the advance had ceased, turning to the joyful son of Pillan, who remained a considerable distance behind – more through authority and confidence than fear, they sent a soldier to the general, who was occupying some ground in the spacious valley of Talcamabia, abundant in pasture and provisions.

A valiant barbarian who owned this valley found a Christian Indian on the way; not wishing to kill him, he took him prisoner – to his home, and tried to reason with him:

“Oh wretched man; I want to spare your life, though you do not deserve it. When you went to war, and enjoyed the honour of a warrior, why did you hide among the women, and watch your comrades die? You must be a weakling to have such a fear of weapons; so I want you to be completely obedient when it comes to serving me. I entrust you with the responsibilities which are allocated to an honest woman: you can organize the catering and refresh the others, just as a sound sleep refreshes tired limbs, when the sun has made two orbits and the Araucanian has not woken up, buried in a sleep so deep, as if he had been dead for 1,000 years – until the sun gives light to the world at its third turn; when awoken, one man will first ask for worn-out clothes, and the other ask whether the food is ready.” The servant replied that it was cold after cooking. He explained how he had spent 50 hours in bed, and forgotten about work and food – together with the rest of what had happened; when the food appeared he found himself fully refreshed by his sleep.

The barbarian replied: “I am not ashamed of having slept for so long. Cunning Lautaro perceived that in order to make your arrival desirable he should keep his people assembled in squadrons, organized with such order and judgment that every one of the posts was defended – from Apollo’s completion of one day until his rays of light had given us a second circuit. Anyone moved from his post without discharge would be impaled; anyone who fell asleep from exhaustion would be hung between two pikes; whoever cut an ear would die there, taking more of what he had given, according to the strict orders we were under.

“We were the soldiers of destiny, standing our ground for more than 40 nights, pikes on high, brought to bear on our enemies, awaiting your tardy arrival; we were worn down with sleep, undergoing painful travail, until we could see that you had arrived, and exhaustion had halted us at that point.”

In view of the silence that prevailed in the valley, the question arose as to whether it was deserted; the old man said “before dawn yesterday a great noise arose here;” he claimed not to know the reason, although he understood from clear signs that the city of Penco was unprotected from the Spaniards. That was the truth: the conquering squadrons had pushed forward to the Spanish people, helpless in the face of the well-hidden Indians. Greed for booty pushed them onwards; they were seven leagues from the Valley of Penco and arrived there at midday.

In sight of the houses, the people spread out onto all the roads, their bags were full of clothing; scarcely had they taken the signal to leave, when as if by a black band of starlings demolishing a mountain of white corn, the people were swamped by the enemy army.

In dead silence the desolate city waited for the rapid assault – the proud onset of barbarian fury which duly descended with a mighty, rushing uproar. Even the least greedy there coveted the most luxurious, best-provided residences; a great mob surged through their gaping open doors. In a flash, they ran right through the houses and quickly scoured the nooks and crannies; many, meeting no resistance, they threw caution to the winds. They broke open the cases, grabbed carpets and ornaments, bails of silk and banners.

The Greeks, entering the Trojan houses, shedding Phrygian blood and living fire, did not raze the buildings to their foundations with such rigour as did the barbarians, blind with fury and desperate for vengeance ruin, destroy, lay waste – and still their malice was unassuaged.

Some scaled the ladders, others came down; some looted the clothing while others broke open the coffers; some unhinged and unloaded; others plundered all bundles and trinkets. Some struggled, some quarrelled, some gave up. Some claimed everything and grabbed what they felt was theirs. Through the towers, attics and lofts careered the booty-laden barbarians. There was never such a buzz of frenzy in a beehive when the workers toil to make honey in their combs as those men got into; nor could their seizing the pollen from the soft flowers compare to the energy of these people – none of them were content with looting the houses of their props of happiness; the insatiate will pushed them onwards in search of greater prizes. Taking a greedy and stupid course, they look for the uncertain and leave the secure; reaching the post at sundown, they went on rummaging and found nothing.

They also robbed each other of booty; so there was little counting of blessings, little friendship; things were not placed in safety through friendly errands; there the best thief got the lion's share; whoever was dragging a sack would not trust his own brother; no-one would give anyone else part of what he could carry for himself.

Just as shrewd, thrifty termites prepare for the winter, come and go, to and from the places of abundance, transporting provisions – not hindering or overloading the already laden, so did the greedy Araucanians quickly enter, leave and turn. Whoever had a good haul did not hope for more, but quickly set fire to the room, neither bothering to check whether the others were at a safe distance, nor showing any consideration for the building.

From house to house the greedy flames spread in their fury, burning alive many wretched people. High and low the fire poured out, menacing the heavens with its horror. The hapless city was engulfed in thick smoke and flame. The earth trembled like a potter's wheel; the fire roared, straining to go up into the stratosphere. The stout timbers crashed down, blasted to ashen dust.

There was lost the most populous city of gold in the land; there, according to legend, great treasures were buried amidst its ruins. How many were in bitter tears at the war continuing elsewhere! Poverty is a greater misery for those who have been accustomed to wealth. Some earned 10,000 ducats a year, some 20,000, some 30,000 – even the poorest earned 1,000; there was nobody below that level. Valdivia's district would have been one of boundless wealth, if the city had been kept at peace: around it were rich veins, full of gold, easy to mine. 100,000 labourers served those in the helpless city; it was no sweat for them to take a huge quantity of gold: shall I say that they lost their minds and flexed their sword arms so that land, property and livestock all turned into red hot coals.

The barbarians intoned with high-pitched cries; pleasure did not fit into their breasts – seeing that the horrid fire did not spare beautiful stables or ornate rooms. In that crowd there was no person who struggled when he saw them in such chaos, before sighing and whimpering, being offensive while they were defending themselves from the flames.

The conflagration took a long time to complete its course; it had a lot of ground to cover. They cursed tempestuous Tracio because the feeble flames did not spread; as the houses fell, there rose, sonorous, a terrible howl, joining the smoke and sparks, rising menacing to the stars. The proud flames rose so high that they lit up the highest clouds, with a shuddering movement. Tracio shook the trees; Vulcan, dirty and soiled, added to the noise with his blacksmith's bellows, playing his part in the fast-spreading fire, thus getting empowered everywhere.

Nero's pleasure at seeing great Rome ablaze as he fiddled was never greater than was the delight of those marauding barbarians at seeing the city being consumed by that conflagration. It was a dire and terrible thing to hear the sound of explosions and mighty uproar, the thick, black, insufferable smoke, as a cloud, imprinting itself on the sky. That holocaust spared nothing; everything was consumed in it, reducing the rich, elevated buildings to flattened courtyards.

Having gained deep satisfaction, that proud, vindictive people, did not cease with their evil intent: they left nothing alive in their path.

As I said, the fire finally abated and a messenger with a great prize arrived from the son of Leocan: *his mission will be described in the next canto.*

Canto VIII

(The main chieftains gather at the General Council of Arauco. Tucapel murders Chief Puchecalco and Caupolicán comes with a powerful army to the Imperial City, founded in the Vale of Cauten.)

The pure honour of an outraged soul could never forget that affront, but rather brought it home to the faint-hearted that the outrage was quite unjustified, and that all the righteous could point to it as a shocking example.

If our people took a good look at the fear in their hearts and resisted it, maintained their estates and houses and met the just demands made on them, they would be afflicted with 1,000 sorrows. They did not penetrate the territory of that mob who neither spoke well of them, nor ever held back from criticising them.

But on taking a good look around, they could not fail to see the difference in the numbers of people, the shambles that was the city, and the sight of the throats of so many innocent people – blameless boys, girls and women put to the sword. That would be an excuse for any reprisal.

If I were not making a worldly explanation, I would consider this to be a just punishment from God for a great excess of human pride – considering that the barbarous enemy, who were the Spaniards' oppressed subjects, ejected them from their land, deprived them of their possessions and outraged their honour.

Although there were many people at Concepcion, the majority were old men, with white beards and furrowed brows, useless at the art of war, very few of them in a fit state to resist the great rigour of Mars and of capricious Fortune, which showed itself ominous in all its aspects. Who could stand against Lautaro's horde, seeing that his power grew so much, and prosperous fortune opened the road to his benefit and our ruin? Who could think of going to the heavens above and ruining its monarchy, making those proud barbarians wild, courageous and torn?

Then the desolated people of Penco, consumed by the wild flames, saw how, at enormous risk, an Indian messenger arrived, known to have been sent by Caupolicán, who had for his part recommended that in this memorable battle, victory should be conceded to the Indians.

Without going into details, I would add that the General ordered Lautaro to leave with his speediest squadrons and proceed to the fertile Vale of Arauco where the Senate and the Council of elders were assembled to work out the general will and consensus. On hearing this order Lautaro, without more ado, struck camp, left the great land and approached Mount Andalican. Hearing the cheers loud and clear, they all, without steadying themselves, cast off

their arms and ran to embrace each other. Caupolicán, happy, humane and brave, received them, embraced the good Lautaro, gave presents and spoke eloquently of his dear brother. The people, whose love for him was undiminished, went to the bank of a clear brook and, forming small circles, toasted the great victory.

The celebrations went on until the Grand Senate was convened; they got through their working day and followed their schedule from beginning to end without missing a single point. But finally, at the set time, the rest of the people arrived, simultaneously with the principal men of the land who had come to call a Council of War. Among them was that general, dressed in regalia which Valdivia had previously given him: it was of green and purple fabric, embroidered with rich silver and gold, a strong breastplate which had seen good war service, tempered by scrupulous polishing; a sallet of bright, shining steel with an emerald globe for its crest. All the captains present were wearing Spanish clothes; the common people and the soldiers saw the spoils which they bore: hose, jerkins and torn leather which they held in great esteem. Considering anything which they had not plundered from the Spaniards to be base and useless, they ordered the chiefs to come in a triumphal procession, bedecked as Spaniards. There attended the Council 130 selected chiefs. These followed ancient custom, according to which they had been trained to use the sword. The proud people kept deep silence, but then there rose Caupolicán's voice:

"I think it well understood, men, because our glory is growing. This is not a heavy exercise in reasoning, so I will only touch on it briefly in response to your strong hearts: the Spanish came here; and the Great Emperor, Charles the unvanquished, subjugated the realm of Arauco. We see the Spaniards, who understand the power of barbed maces; they lie in wait for us, either in the field, or behind walls; we know how they cut their swords. Their armour affords them little defence from the blows of sharp axes, but when their pikes are long and hefty they are a match for yours.

"I want to be assured of your intent (since I am convinced of your courage) – that you can flatten great walls of tempered steel when you thrust your breasts at them. With this confidence, I will be first to follow your band and support your right to win against mighty Spain and then go on to conquer the world.

"We understand their God; if it descends from the high, crystalline heavens, we will open up a broad path of pure iron to destroy their race and lineage. No divine army, power, effort or art will save them if we strike a total, decisive blow – all in one go.

"Finally, brave warriors: I can say no more of my intent. Whoever wants me as a friend can give a sign; whoever holds me as an enemy, let him make step forward."

He hoped for a calm reply to his declared intention. His eyebrows did not move; breath barely sustained his life. For the duration of the proud Council, summoned by the great Caupolicán, there was courtesy in the replies and in the ceremony. He touched Lautaro and, excused, Lincoya replied animatedly:

“Sir, through all the time I have lived in this sad world, I have never been so delighted as I am now – seeing your brave intent, your spirit and the rightness of your cause. For such a glorious stratagem I offer you my services. I would not want to be king of heaven and earth if the war were to end here.

“As proof of that I swear to accompany you on your actions. I would never turn my back on my country, however bitter the adversity – on that you can be assured: the whole world would come undone before the sworn pledge of a man like me would be betrayed.”

So he spoke – to be followed by the good *Peteguelen*, and old *Curaca*, very distressed with their dire circumstances but calm and collected, easy-going and human, old, lean, alert, well-built, lords of that beautiful and fertile plain. With an expansive voice and grave gestures he proposed a course of action based on sound reasoning:

“Strong man and perfect captain – I will remain on the front line to prove the strength of this corselet; I will not leave it if the corselet is broken by an axe. As all will understand, I promise to be the first one to drive the Spaniards from this land, and to carry the war into Spanish territory.

“It will be good for us to be satisfied with the legacy of the past bestowed on us, and expel our enemies who are empowered with it. Through our success we will better grasp the form of our destiny, and better direct our future. That’s how things are to me: let anyone who disagrees speak out.”

Tucapel approached, blazing with fury; he silenced that chief without showing him any respect, then spoke in a proud, bold voice: “Spain does not frighten me, and I do not want to be considered as a man who was ruined by the Christians – whether they are gods or men. For me, throwing them out of Chile and destroying them will not be a sufficient act of war; I yearn to confounding them in the bowels of the earth. If they flee, my mace will pursue them, to banish them altogether from this world. No fear stands in our path – of doing what we can.

“Let my right arm assure you that the hard-tipped mace, which has sustained me for 2 years; in spite of heaven, it has done its duty, given an excellent account of itself. It will not leave one wall standing upright in Spain, and that will arouse me to do more – after the broad ground is levelled, it will arouse the very skies to war. It is not fate which puts obstructions before us; it is our own cowardice; it is just naïve to think that fortune exists; it is just a matter of strength in arms. The machinery of the sky, and all its strength, will fall beneath the pieces we have made, if *Tucapel* falls the least bit short of what he promised.”

Peteleguen, his old, cold blood now boiling with rage, stood up and said “Oh arrogant one: Courage is useless without discretion!” But *Caupolicán*, long acquainted with the old man’s sturdy soul, cut short his arguments, and put his own proposal before the elders. *Puren*

offered himself there; and so did Angol, with no less reckless courage. Ongolmo, it appeared, did not want to show his proud thoughts; then masses more came forward making the same offer.

Colocolo, who had listened attentively to everyone else, now spoke: “Oh young ones: the state of the land arouses your fury. We old ones have no more value in the world than that of giving sound advice; but that advice I will give. Let us not all be blinded by the steamy smoke of young blood’s tender years. Now being freer, we elders understand those things that confused us as young men.

“You, brave captains, your pride swollen by a solitary victory, are elevated so that your sons seem small to you: temper, temper your seething breasts, and these vain, ill-regulated efforts. Do not underestimate the Spaniards, so as to trade your lives for a poor price. If you win a second victory, remember that when they first came, you could not resist them. They defeated you five times; in the blood-drenched fields you saw what just forty of them could do. It will be no mean achievement to recover the land and credit that we have lost. We must use our brains and skill to redeem our country and set ourselves free – and restrict the scope of headstrong courage, which can do more harm than good. Oh son of Leocan! I urge you: if you want to govern us wisely, temper this fury, and with a mature brain, plan a strategy for the future.

“The most realistic course of action is to divide this assembly into 3 bands, and for each one to set off simultaneously, in different directions, over the Cauten, abhorred people. Although they are good at defensive action, they are not many, and with this rearguard destroyed, it will be easy to flatten Valdivia, since we are beyond the range of his arquebuses and his artillery. It is only Santiago that worries me; we must now find some way to get inside it; then we can easily raze Serena to the ground. Though we are subject to what Fate ordains, this is the best course open to us.” Thus the wise old man finished his speech; the majority found his advice to be sound.

After this there spoke Curaca, a magician, debilitated by old age, calling himself Puchecalco the soothsayer; he was considered reliable in making prophecies. Intimate and proud, but saddened, he said, with a deep sigh:

“I name black *Eponamon* as a witness to what I have always said, and am saying now. For a short time liberty was accorded to you, and you enjoyed it. I cannot change the judgement which the stars have ordained, and which fortune pushes onward – to your distress. It is remarkable that a stringent destiny has called you to hard subjection, but also to moments of strength, at least making up for many deaths.

“The air was full of signals; the night birds disturbed the sky with a heavy flight, announcing 1,000 vast calamities; the abundant plants bear no fruit; they dry up. The sun, the moon, the stars and 100,000 auguries confirm this dire destiny. Having observed and contemplated all, I do not know anything from which I can take hope. I see that Orion, armed with his sword, is

menacing the earth; Jupiter has retired to Ocaso – so sanguinary Mars alone possesses the sky: indicating a future war, he lights a bellicose fire on earth.

“Furious, inexorable death comes to us with an irate hand; our friend good fortune shows us a different face; horrid and frightful Eponamon is turned into our boiling blood: holding a bent claw, his body stiff, raising us to the unknown door.” Tucapel, hearing the old man but not listening to him, flew into a rage:

“Let’s see if that idiot can defend himself against me.” Thus said he raised the mace, and brought it down on the old man. This showed that he never changed the planets’ orbits, nor was he a divine prophet. That arm remained so impressive, following the example, that it was poised to sweep right across the Religious Council; I do not know the cause of its stopping.

Caupolicán, astonished and raging, as if out of his mind, turned on him with a proud and horrible voice, crying “Captains! Die! Die!” Nothing that Caupolicán said ever gave so much pleasure to those people as when that opportunity was given to the proud barbarian. The tribunal were elated, but that valiant man made them jump up and fight: there were 130 of them; Caupolicán took them all on.

Those who remained in the High Tribunal are indicated in this history, never moving from the positions where they could observe him safely. They did not care to see one person getting so excited about so little, though those who jumped from such a height had less respect for the jump. Covered in fine mail, Tucapel, dark and nimble, leaped into the timid crowd – that gallant man making room for himself with whirlwind cries in an unequal battle, with stones, sticks, arrows, lances and darts. The crowd pursued him as if he were a proud, intrepid bull. Showing great dexterity, the brave man gave a good example; he rushed forwards, backwards, left and right, with ever more confidence and speed, showing himself strong and skilful in the blows he struck; proud Tucapel launched himself into the fight with his heavy mace.

He was not satisfied with crippling and disabling; those were not enough, with his mace, he made sure his victims were smashed to pulp; he fractured, bruised, ground and tormented; he abused, destroyed, crippled, laid waste. Missiles showered over them like a furious hailstorm.

But that sanguinary barbarian ran on through the dense array of weapons; on that day alone he broke countless proud arms, heads and souls, scattered a mire of blood and fresh brains. One could not distinguish the relation from the stranger; they were all the same in devastation.

The Spaniards’ arms were their only defence against the barbarous Araucanian host, who strove *en masse* to assault them. But fear curtailed the offensive. It was certainly admirable to see the insane fury of this attack, dismembering people, but unable to prevail against such mobility and weaponry.

Caupolicán had not thought that the engagement would erupt into such fury as to make him determined to forge ahead (although his better judgement restrained him); but Lautaro, happy and esteemed, wondered how a man who could struggle against such ferocity could be doubting and incredulous about himself. With due respect, and with his eyes turned to the ground, he said: "I beg one favour of you; if anything merits my dedication, it is that we duly forgive Tucapel for the disrespect he has committed, since he has clearly proved on the field that he is better than all those people ranged against him."

The General stood, perplexed, feeling some doubt, but then, reflecting on the one who had purportedly failed him, changed his tune: "He has been helpful enough to all of you; for that I pardon him." He added that he was with the squadrons, and ordered the fighting to cease.

Lautaro went down to the field and promptly sounded the horn to retreat; at that sound, his men gathered, with no regrets weighing them down. But one valiant barbarian was dissatisfied with his efforts; turning to Lautaro with a proud gesture, he spoke thus: "How, good captain, could you thwart the destruction of this vile rabble, and block my revenge against them, which would clearly demonstrate my courage?"

Lautaro replied: "Whoever enters the struggle with you, whoever proves himself against you is pardoned, according to what is demonstrated here. You can join me, and I assure you that no harm will come to you. To that Tucapel said: "I swear to you that fear will not hold me back by one step; my mace is my protector; I want to go and wreak my vengeance like the rest; fear is for boys and women. Let us then go and do what we will." The two of them arrived at the Tribunal, Tucapel a few steps ahead of Lautaro. They climbed the stairs, their footsteps unwavering. The wise general dealt with them, dissimulating with a gracious appearance, and set the tone of the meeting with his speech. Lautaro clinched things thus:

"Unconquered captain, you have listened attentively to the proposals from these men, and I do not know how to convey to you the main substance of what his efforts have demonstrated to me. I have a strong desire to serve you, and my efforts will demonstrate this desire. In order to gain your esteem, it would mean little to sacrifice 1,000 lives. The strong warriors are helping you regain your territory: each of them has a stake in it, and in the art of warfare. Although you take all the final decisions, this is what seems best for me, more conducive to the public good.

"You must abide by my casting vote at the Council, and pay heed to wise Colocolo, whose destiny it is to speak the truth. So, sir, without delay, put this plan into action, before the Christians have time to prepare, while their resistance to us is still weak. And since only Mapocho is afraid, since the rest of them are high on mighty Eponamon – I beg you to give me the job of destroying them. He has intervened in every recent confrontation in the land, and has always campaigned against the Spaniards, understanding their cunning and their inventiveness, their ways, their arts, their timings, their opportunities. I only want 500 Araucanians for the enterprise. I propose that these be selected from our people; there is no

need for a single extra soldier. This I say in your presence, and in that of these wise chiefs, for whom I am pledged to return to this city with 100 Christian heads.”

Thus spoke the proud barbarian. For a long time the assembly chatted about it – seemingly constructively. They all came to agreement; the people, eager to know the news, descended to where the decision and the decree were publicly announced.

There were 40 days of rejoicing and feasting, filled with games and happiness, in which they drank many times for bets. Then the jubilant Araucanians were ranged against the people of the Messiah. Caupolicán marched with the vanguard, leaving Lemolemo with the rearguard. Nearby was the furious imperial army, based in a strong position, where the proud, all-conquering enemy now thought of handing themselves over to death. *But the omnipotent Eternal Father had plans for a different destiny, prolonging the well-merited lash – as you will now learn if you lend an attentive ear.*

Canto IX

(With a big army the Araucanians got to within 3 leagues of the Imperial: their intentions did not receive divine permission. They returned to their own territory, where they got news of the Spaniards being in the Penco district, rebuilding Concepcion City; they marched against the Spaniards and there was a tough battle.)

If people now do not see as many miracles as they did in the past, there is a strong case for making a few prophecies, and an opportunity for Christian law to be vindicated. *If God wishes to heal a sick person, that person will get better, in the course of time, according to the resources of his own metabolism. If God elevates a wretched person and dignifies him by normal means, or if he strikes down a proud man by means of natural causes – the fortunes of his life, though mediated, will take their natural course.*

*We see that God desires his will to be done, and implements his will **in a natural way**, using the instruments of nature, over which he alone has power; those who believe in him with pure faith deserve more than just looking for the intangible, longing for the impossible.*

As someone opposed to sowing doubts, I have reservations about telling this story: it is a miracle to which a whole army bore witness. I will be scrupulous in describing this event; I will not hold back from recounting it, nor will the Indians flinch from affirming it. *And we shall see that on that day, because the sacred law went beyond itself, Our Lord permitted the Natural Order to exceed itself; one can presume that, in this life, because barbarous customs and blind people accept the Faith, there is clearly a case for miracles.*

I have explained how the Araucanian army was encamped at 3 leagues from the Imperial City, in a prepared space on a plain, and that Caupolicán was determined to enter the city by force. But even as God dealt out just punishment to this ungracious and shameless people, he exercised clemency and restraint. The Imperial City was without weapons, munitions or provisions; although its people were well-chosen, they were ill-prepared for battle. The city was razed to the ground – that force was enough to destroy it. No inmate coming in sight of the barbarians escaped.

When the army wanted to move from there, and the horn sounded to proceed, the atmosphere suddenly became disturbed, eerily thickened by freaks of nature: clouds closed in with each other; a turbulent noise arose with violent, seething gusts. The four winds showed their fury; intricate clusters of clouds threw out driving rain and thick hail; lightning and thunder ruptured the skies and opened up the earth; it raised a barrier against the bitter winds lying violently in its entrails; then it was seized by a whirlwind, rising with a furious spin. *A universal fear tormented everyone; there was no heart, no steadfast, steely soul that did not tremble in such confusion, fury and torment.*

Here Eponamon presented himself to them in the form of a proud, horrible dragon, with a twisted neck turned into fire. In a raucous voice, he told them of the fury was riding above the terrified Spanish people; any band that arrived in the vicinity could be dealt with at great speed, delivered to fire and the sword – with no man left alive, no wall still standing. I say this so that all can understand it. *All was smothered in smoke; nothing was visible.*

At that point, the seething elements calmed down, and the unbridled four winds retired to their caverns; the clouds returned to their seats, leaving a clear sky and pure sunlight. But fear did not vacate its place, in the boldest breast.

The tempest had ceased; the clear sky swathed the damp field in happiness, when, with a bright, fast flight a woman came into view, covered in a beautiful limpid veil, with such splendour that the brightness of the sun, in front of her at midday, was like that which surrounded a star.

Banishing fear, the sacred face comforted all with its arrival. She was accompanied by a white bearded man, seemingly grave and sacred, who spoke to them in a soft, delicate voice: “Where are you going, you lost people? Turn your steps homewards; do not go to the Imperial.

“God wants to help his Christians, give them power and authority over you; but you, ungrateful, rebellious and inhuman ones, have refused obedience to him. Take care; do not go there: God holds the knife in his hands and will deliver his judgement!”

Saying that, they both left ground level and ascended the spacious atmosphere to reach the heavens.

With fixed and eager eyes the Araucanians followed the glorious vision of this old man, covered in a white veil. And when this phenomenon had disappeared, they looked at each other, like ones waking in astonishment from a dream; they spoke not a word. All with one heart and mind, without hoping for an order or request (as if that alone was his intention, they then took the road of Arauco – orderless, as if scattered in the wind; it seemed as if the swords were burning behind them, and launching a major attack).

*I have researched the details, sir, in order not to write confusedly: this miracle took place on 23rd April 1554, in the presence of many people. The truth is declared in toto, according to what is known of the barbarians; it is not adorned with fabrications, which do not fit with such material. Some say (though there is little to authenticate their claim) that, because of this vision there were two years of death, devastation, famine and sorrow in the land. *Just as the sea, repressing its vapours, causes drought in the streams of the mountains and destroying the land freshly covered in flowers, is helped by the fires of war; just as the arid land,**

through lack of humidity, got hotter and drier, broke up the earth and stole away its fruits, neglecting to come with its tribute.

An epidemic struck the Araucanian realm, where cannibalism was practised (revolting introduction! Inhuman action!) error was converted into parricide, brother taking sustenance from brother – whose mother had her most desired son sticking out of her belly.

I say that the barbarians reached the valley of Puren, their paternal ground, then, drawing their weapons, they gave way to the stormy sky. At that time, in those parts, when winter drew in with its ice, and imposed its authority on the land, it called a halt to warfare. The people scattered in droves, leaving the fields, heading for the populated area; the army ceased action. The land was smothered in humid clouds.

But when the sun rose, burning in Scorpio, and shook the snow from the summits of the mountains, already crowned with new grass – it was then that noisy Mars took out his carriage with a horrible uproar, and burning with anger, heading for the well-prepared Araucanians, caused the land to tremble, everywhere the iron-shod horses driving on, sharp steel in the right hand beating against strong shield in the left. Then the warriors, goaded to fury, left their repose and took up arms; the proud strangers came, eager for war. They sharpened the points of their spears, and tempered their ropes into sturdy arcs; they added weight to their maces and felt the hardness of their ash-wood spears.

The people advanced in this manner, with the clashing of weapons and a clamour of voices. They hoped to join battle quickly; those most illustrious people joined in the customary drinking bout (ancient custom and detestable vice) – to give definition to the day.

At the Council, they were discussing the welfare and expansion of their state – when four others arrived, with heavy steps, telling what had happened in the ruined state of Penco: a number of Spaniards working there had erected a strong, thick wall.

The word were hard: “Come, warriors; let us rally on behalf of our neighbours; we have the forces rescue them. If you exile yourselves again to the Christians, to be paid in money for your toil and the labour of your hands, you will not be satisfied by the deal; you will only receive one-third of what was agreed. Seeing the weakness of objections and resistance which we alone can sustain without your favour, they plainly expect the obedience which we are accustomed to giving in our unhappy times. And that was not because of oppression or violence; although we are wretched, we understand when sudden death looms – *and can impose a limit on destiny.*

“But because Arauco is so near, and fixes in its favour the unstable rumbling, it seems better to remedy all the problems by peaceful means. Bitter fate already wreaks destruction; there remains afterwards time for us to die. *Then our arms will not be so tired that they cannot open our sides.* And then it is obvious, from the message, and the great prize we bring to you,

that we hope for a reply which offers a resolution – we appeal from prompt action. We could now, without great risk, strike down the proud Spaniard and destroy his confidence, before delay gives him any chance to rally.”

It is impossible to describe the delight which this message gave to the chiefs; they were all in one mind before formally accepting what was. Then they took on the restraints and the sufferings which the first voice had decreed. The son of Leocan, who having been consulted, responded thus in the name of the Senate: “We are rightly amazed at what we have just heard. Is it true that there are Christians so intrepid as to want further conflict with us? Come: show that you are brave men, accept the promise and the challenge, not ending the day of work that you do not want to quit? You can well go along with that, for there is no doubt that we can manage it into. We will prevail over the Christians in a flash – and clearly justify the low regard in which we hold them: but you must remember that sound advice has been given to us on all aspects of our task.”

The four of them left, very happy to have received such a reply. They briefly turned to their lords who were waiting, and in view of the good despatch which they were carrying, hiding its contents and their own treachery, they discreetly paraded their vexations, thus concealing their false intentions. They showed themselves to be amenable in their dealings; nobody opted to defend the case, knowing that the resolution of the issue depended on the Araucanian army. With a double and solicitous contract, the hoped-for vengeance was kept a deadly secret, concealed under a cloak of humility, until it was ultimately put into effect.

I have been a bit casual in describing the devastation of our people; but as it is customary to protect the defeated, I have taken a straight path through the lucky side. Here the occasion did not give me sufficient information, so I never thought that I could tackle it properly. I will describe the depopulation of the city and the path taken by its citizens – taking them to the end of the day, I have now decided to leave them; but returning to the story which had begun, and to the hard progress of its destiny – much happened in Santiago, on which I will not elaborate here.

Having retired there, they reassembled with all the relevant equipment, and decided by a majority vote to rebuild their settlement at Penco. With great effort, and at great expense, they raised a replica of the old town – and a small number of people; I cannot exactly work out whether this was because of small payment or great fear. They reached the grassy wilderness of Penco, and found a site in its midst which they fortified with a wall – surrounding a recessed square sheltered by two strong bastions – each one of which had two faces, and each face of which had openings to defend the passage with gunfire.

The neighbouring people, with feigned signs, ensured an armed truce, waiting for the promised help signalled by muted bells; but this departure was not in secret, since amongst the Christians it was known that the valiant Lautaro had passed through the hills with his army fully assembled. It was known that Puren came there with Tome, Pillolco, Angol and

Cayeguano; Tucapel, whom no Araucanian equalled in pride and bravery, Ongolmo, Lemolemo and Lebopia, Caniomangue, Elicura, Mareguano, Cayocupil, Lincoya, Lepomande, Chilcano, Leucoton and Mareande. All of these exceptional men were prepared for this war, together with 2,000 chattering soldiers, selected from the great army. They were harnessed with strong breastplates and equipped with great pikes of well-wrought steel, ironed maces, sharp axes, missiles and slings.

Thus the squadron travelled in the shadows of the silent night under the command of the capable Lautaro, who tried to arrive when the morning star brightened the gloomy field and its greenery, before there was any intimation of his arrival.

But the Spaniards learnt from a friendly Indian how the enemy army was approaching with dire intent. On being informed of what had been kept secret, they prepared for battle – filling the moat and manning the wall. The leader and captain of the Spanish was the noble mountain man Juan de Alvarado, shrewd, diligent, skilful – and of great tenacity. Knowing the pressing danger, he wasted no time or opportunity speeding up the counter-measures.

Having assembled his soldiers, and having put each of them in his place, he ordered 9 of his most experienced warriors to make a dash across the country, under cover of darkness. They reached the camp of the barbarians, who became aware of the ‘silent squadron’ – raising terrible yells. The outcry, the surprise attack, the din, the sudden uproar of war, the sonorous trumpets and drums, made the land groan and tremble: because of this the wily runners took a short cut over a small mountain range and gave warning to the friendly company.

With great skill Juan de Alvarado fortified the weak point and despatched pikemen and arquebusiers there, making a cluster at each point to meet the Araucanian lancers with squadrons of light cavalry – in order to show no fear when facing them.

The new light of the next day showed itself over the clear horizons; then sun, fresh from the golden East, tinted the clouds with red. At that hour, Alvarado and his men searched far and wide for Lautaro’s band, who were coming nearer. Our men had only ventured half a league from the wall when, on the brow of a mountain, they saw the Araucanian army in full battle order. There the burnished weapons glinted more brightly than clear crystal, touched by the sun. The sallets were covered in bright plumage – green, blue, white and red. Who could depict what it was like when the Araucanians heard the noise and, raising their right arms on high, yelled into the sky. Sounding 1,000 barbarous instruments, with great pride and long strides, they formed their company into a circle and started surrounding the Spaniards.

The Spanish wanted to respond to them with the gruesome sound of armed hands. They descended the mountain in order to attack them, thinking the situation on the plain was better: the lances came down to break them. But this brave action proved in vain, for the well-disciplined barbarians closed ranks.

They knocked down masses of pikes, and moved forward with firm feet and faces, so that they not only stemmed the attack but were strong enough to penetrate the enemy's ranks. Then our men withdrew in good order and proceeded gloriously, with potent fury, to follow their lucky break to its conclusion, advancing with nimble steps.

They pressed on, fighting vigorously, until they reached a narrow pass – where Lautaro blew his horn. The obedient Araucanian army followed the signal; he was just a blowpipe-shot away from our force. Lautaro waited, intending to hold the operation until the heat of the day, because the cool breeze of early morning refreshes horses and men; he reformed his squadron, making an assembly in sight of our men, who had stubbornly rallied at the strongpoint, thinking that the best place. When the sun stood in the middle of the sky, not declining at a single point, and a sharp crackling intoned in a grating counterpoint, the shrewd Lautaro struck camp with a tightly packed mass. With a great hue and cry, at a steady pace, they headed for the Spanish strongpoint.

With arrogant audacity Lautaro marched on the fort; his men followed him in battle array. Gracefully, he bore with him a long, thick, knotty lance which, little by little, airily divided into three; he brandished it so boldly that he appeared to join the 3 parts together. The few Spaniards retired to a safe distance. Not wanting to be surrounded, they made a row of arquebuses beyond the range of the pikes – in a position to inflict some damage. Some went off to join the others. Spurred on by gut rancour, the animated armies came; the guns resounded. All were covered in earth, fire and powder. The bows, vigorously flexed, made many shots; showers of hard missiles were thrown by valiant arms. Those contrary floods crashed into each other with a rapid, resounding current. It is certain that, resisting at the time of intermingling; the stronger battled against the weaker without there seeming to be any reversal of the tide: So did the barbarian current surge on our squadron.

The Spaniards could not withstand the courage, numbers and impetus of the host; the barbarians swept them away like a gale blowing chaff. They entered without order – things were already running red, all mixed together in the thick sediment. Within the square of the broad walls there was tough hand-to-hand combat. Some of them did not want to retreat into the fort; they had sorrow in their hearts and did not want to operate in a confined space; they sought the open field, and divided themselves by the dies of the chaotic pile. But the stronger ones tried with daring hands to protect the square which had been penetrated. There they wanted to defend themselves or die. Others took the broader path, which was consistent with self-protection; others yet again went to the coast – boarding a boat, unable to stand any more, they raised the curved anchor. Giving in to fear and ill intent, they rapidly unfurled the sails to the wind. *Whoever is somewhat lazy in arriving, coming to weigh anchor, has no doubts about throwing himself into the furious sea, thinking that not to be the worst of deaths.* Whoever did not swim before now feels the breaking waves and learns: look, then at the terror which has come, generating fear in a brave man.

Those who retreated into the fort defended themselves like good warriors; they wanted to meet an honourable end, to die but not be conquered. Emboldened by their stance, they went on the attack, with no hope of survival, wreaking such havoc on the enemy that the square became a lake of blood.

Lautaro, leading people and arms, was one of the first to enter the fort; on entering, he killed two soldiers who happened to be standing in his path; Lincoya rampaged, wounding and striking down, but who could describe the bravery of Tucapel, whom heaven would accommodate if he could find any road or staircase to it?

That strong man did not enter by door or bridge; with a skilful, assured jump he sprang sprightly over the moat and landed on the highest point of the fort. Nobody could follow him there; he, the only one, made the attack, but as if escorted by 1,000, he then threw himself into the midst of the enclosure. Scarcely had he landed firmly on the square, when the furious barbarian, wielding his thick, hard, well-used mace, went scattering his enemies. Chain mail and armour were of no avail; brains were crushed inside strong helmets, unable to withstand the heavy blows raining down on them. He left some injured, some crippled, some mortally wounded; with others, he thrust their necks into their breasts; others again – he broke their backs and sides as if they were made of soft wax. He bruised, mauled, bent and twisted. At the greatest peril, fearing neither arms nor men, he thrust himself into the throng – turning against Ortiz with a show of fury like that which had slain Tarquin; the vigorous man, wielding his mace, his sights fixed, broke furiously through the mass of arms. Nobody knew who the sword was aimed at, nor that the powerful arm which held the staff of the Araucanians had only two fingers.

With the conflagration that he aroused, he did not immediately feel the wound, but after he had delivered the blow, he sensed that he had lost his fingers and his mace. *No wounded tiger was so brave, nor hunted lion so impatient as was that Indian who, full of rancour, blasphemed against heaven and hell, earth and sea.* Standing on tiptoe, towering above the other people, he thrust his arm as far back as he could, and violently hurled the piece at Ortiz, who held a sword high against him.

He broke the sallet and the helmets, and freed from the burden of heavy grief, put his numbed, unfeeling hands on the ground. The barbarian, not feeling fully avenged by this action, came upon him with heightened fury; fearless, and raging, he stopped the sword of Ortiz with his right arm; lifting his tabard on one side, he transfixed him from flank to flank, making a brutal separation of the soul from its bodily lodging. Feeling his right arm crippled, the Indian wielded the sword with his left hand; the first blow he knocked down his enemy, who was already badly hurt – *like a speedy reaper cutting dry straw with his right arm, so did Tucapel with prodigious force sever arms, feet and neck.*

Keeping anger as his guide – he rose, furious – wounding some, humiliating others, cutting through the thick wood of the lances. By chance he struck a blow at Padre Lobo. Fighting against four, without seeing the end of that battle, he gave his soul to God and his body to the earth.

Brave *Leucoton*, no less strong, with courage granted him by heaven, wounded, stunned, knocked down and dealt death – none exceeded him in strength and spirit. *I cannot describe everything in full detail; in the midst of that confusion my hand could hardly wield a pen, so I must make a brief summary.*

Also *Angol*, proud and brave, fencing alternately with his hook and his big knife, wounded young Diego Oro and with a heavenly blow made an imprint of his body on the hard ground. But at that point Juan de Alvarado cut him down with a furious thrust, piercing him under the arm as he was raising his cutlass. The enemy sword met no defence; thrusting at the exposed part, it made its penetration to the right of the heart, opening a broad, bloody door. The face before the blushing young man was covered in a withered yellowness, lethal ice dislocating his arm, his frozen body beating the hard ground.

Fat old Mareguano, who was charging around everywhere, arrived just at the moment when Angol, his friend and comrade for many years, lost his right hand to hard steel: “Since fate is just in life, let it be so in death!” In a flash, he turned on the killer, whose chest and veins were scarred, lifted up a hefty tree trunk, and was on the point of bringing it down with great force – but, fearing the devastation from the blow, Alvarado, with an alert eye, took quickly to horse and threw the tree trunk on the ground. Chilcan, Ongolmo, Cayeguan on one side, in the company of Lepomande and Puren, had also closed in on our men in such a way that they gained great credit that day; Tome, Cayocupin and the intrepid Pillolco, Camiomargue and Lebopia, Mareande, Elicura and Lemolemo showed the extremes of their courage.

In the midst of this, there was a sudden roar thundering from the concave skies, proclaiming total victory for the barbarian infidel. The defeated Spaniards took the road to Itala, abandoning the wretched ground drenched in blood and strewn with enemies. Once this fury had commenced, the Spaniards took flight, fear goading them with sharp spurs; going a great difference, and suffering intense privations, they braved the barbarian horde, turning into a cloud of dust, killing off the stragglers.

Alvarado, with spirit and sound judgement, inspired and invigorated them; but it was no use. With such a rupture, in such a narrow space, the spectre of death seized the panic stricken people; some took the road to the mountain, while others tried the more direct path of Mapocho, still doggedly fighting with Atropos. Despising a dishonourable life, they desired an honourable death, extending that inevitable point with rare effort and valiant swords; they almost left the place without a boundary – empty of souls and full of bodies, whom the few

who remained delivered vigorously to death. Some fell with their sides opened up, others were cut from end to end; others, again, gave themselves to death – drained of their own blood and drenched in that of others.

Finally, all were dead there, shredded by hard steel. Let us go after those who are spurring their horses; we don't need to go far to catch up with them. Some went by an uncertain road, some by a path, bitter, dangerous and strange; they spurred their horses, then gave them free rein. It was a day of terror; the barbarian squadron with a horrendous cry echoing through hills, mountains, plains and gullies heated their swords, wounding, striking down and dealing death. That army which had reached the imperial objective ran right through the area until they saw their rights declared: at this, they raised a yell at the conquerors; they wielded their arms, hitherto neutral, against the imperial standards – going in avid pursuit of the Spanish people who ran with greater speed and fury than the wind. Our men could not form another company; the massive confusion which fear put in their hearts scattered them without direction through the hills, valleys and common land.

How one envies those who have nimble horses! How little do they know loyal companions. They accepted neither promises of money, nor of goods proffered there. They were so much in the grip of fear that there was no room in their thoughts for greed. Previously, despising self-interest, they showed themselves to be unconcerned with booty, hurling behind their rich sallets cumbersome breastplates of fine silver. Not caring for the promises, they rapidly took to their heels. They only wanted the wings of Icarus (*though these melted when he was flying over the sea*). That day Juan and Hernando, together with valiant Ibarra, rushed forward, rallying the distressed people; but they did not slow down their steps for them. They opened the narrow path which restricted the nimble horses, and although they vigorously spurred them on, they could not overtake a single Indian.

A long way in front of the main body a valiant barbarian swordsman called Rengo – old man of great renown, harassed the three Spaniards. Alone he daringly chased them, taunting them with words of derision. He caught up with them and they an ahead on the plain, without them being able to gain a single step ahead of him.

“Aye, aye!” he yelled, “Hope, hope!” – that was the only Spanish he knew, but in his mother tongue he lashed them with vicious insults. He ran before them in this manner for three leagues, never ceasing to dog their rear, calling them infamous wrecks; it was just like goading donkeys. He raised a weapon on high; it was a big beech log, badly carved, the size and weight of a rafter, its head covered in metal. He wielded this weapon without any more fatigue than that felt by a slender fencer wielding a light sword with his right hand. Any horse struck down by the tree trunk was left almost broken, so loaded with force was the blow. And so each horse, learning from experience, speeded up without being spurred; there was never a ramrod on the run like the stick of that feared barbarian.

Although that rumpus distanced itself a great deal from the secure mountains and the friendly band, they did not leave their enterprise before he pursued them with rapid steps, insulted them and struck them with his mace. Blaspheming against the Spanish nation in Araucanian which the three, running away from them, understood. Twenty times the Christians turned round, heading for him with sudden speed – he kept all their hands full with his powerful weapon and his dexterity; in the meantime the proud Indians, without hesitation, came in reach. As all three made a bee-line for him, the barbarian and his stick swung over them.

The vigorous progress was not slowed down by the rugged mountains or jagged coasts. Formerly the Puelche were accustomed to running a gauntlet of wild beasts for a bet – runs, afflicts, puts them in a tight spot, molests them. 10 miles ahead, the road crosses the river, ending on the wet edge of the surging sea.

The barbarian squadron had stopped, with only the tenacious Rengo fighting on, not wishing to relent from the struggle, although he saw none of his comrades there; when the Christians stubbornly crossed the broad Ford, Rengo fired a heavy stone at them with his sling. The log was fixed in the damp ground; he swung his arm twice, throwing the rough stone in such a way that the mountain echoed with its deafening din. *The nymphs, at the point of greatest bias of the ford, stirring the crystalline waves, raised their golden heads, seeming to observe what was going on.* The importunate barbarian did not cease his struggle, or weaken in its pursuit; before them, with whistles, yells, and heavy stones, he assailed them at the water's edge. He forbade them to water their horses, saying "Get away from here! I forbid you to camp by the river!"

Proud Alvarado came to Rengo: already impatient with the absurd situation, he said to the other two: "What cowardice on our part that one solitary Indian has taken us on and prevailed against us. It is disgraceful that something like this should happen to Spaniards. Let us return, and not leave this point unless we can make him die first." So he spoke; pulling their reins again, they re-crossed the ford. Determined to kill him or die, they spurred on their tired horses. At this, the Araucanian, knowing the fury with which they were turning, dropped his mace and headed off with flying feet. The three, in fury, chased him for a huge distance over the plain. Their efforts were in vain, because the Indian could outrun them. Lacking in energy, but not in motivation, they drew their reins; a bitter and dangerous siege drew them face to face with that vigorous barbarian.

For a weapon, he took a big, broken log, and then turned on the three of them; then, lacking his customary mace, he shook his sling at them, he taunted them, whistling and throwing stones; unable to attack them, he could still offend them, as they were near a precipice, and the barbarian was more nimble than they were.

Valdivia saw himself as being excused from the completion of what he so much desired, letting that tower of barbaric strength go free. He remained with a bad wish, again to cross the safe ford and return to the beaten track, sad to see that Fortune in this instance was showing herself hard and adverse in everything. He had left Lautaro's camp at great speed to follow the advance. The Spanish scattered, without a path, like sheep far from their folds. *I am determined not to follow them further. For the sake of describing what lay ahead of them, I am forced to leave them where I have done so on other occasions.*

I now want to go over to the Araucanian people, so happy and lucky in that season. As is customary, they escaped from defeat and wretchedness. I want to go where so many go, following the well-trodden path, but then, custom and time convince me, and all the world says **"Long live the Conqueror!"** How prevalent it is to shun the defeated and follow those proud victors, who are favoured by capricious Fortune – only later to be struck down. *At the head of these favours, depreciated in value, are good enterprises, for which we have to pay sevenfold – as the next Canto will show us.*

Canto X

(Proud of their victories, the Araucanians hold some general festivities where various people meet – foreigners as well as natives, among whom there were great tribulations.)

* * *

Sometimes the fickle Goddess smiles and bestows luxurious gifts – how the weak soul is fortified when turned into Mars by a desolated woman; how this weakens the other side, demolishes its war effort – making a mountain out of a plain and a great hill from the palm of a hand!

Who saw the Spaniards gathered above the highest horn of the moon, surrounding it with their famous deeds – and then saw them struck down in a flash, their fortune turned to misery – pursued, not by Mars, but by the timid female sex?

Here fate made her exchange – for those who do not reach the sky – women, on whom the distaff is bestowed, following them in their virile strength. Their right hands, accustomed to domestic tasks, now boldly wielded lances which, propelled by Fate, made their impact, inflicting many wounds. I am describing these women who had been hidden in a mountain, hoping for an end to the battle. When they saw the red banner of Castile, they swarmed down, tearing the sky with their cries, casting off all feminine fears.

Fortified by extraordinary strength and courage, they seized the swords from the dead. Then, in a noisy throng, they too were drunk with victory, turning from their customary softness and timidity into cold-blooded killers. Running with heaving breasts and eight-month bulges, they felt no grief, no pain. Those most heavily pregnant were the best runners – in the front. Those in the rear called themselves unhappy and turned to the heavens in prayer, because – at that juncture on their way – they could not speed up their steps.

If the women acted like that, how would the main body of Indians perform? From this point on it became a matter of principle that women also take part in combat. They came accompanying their husbands and halted at the critical moment; but if the enemy were defeated, they would rush forward in hot pursuit. They tested their enemies' weak points and cut them up with their own swords, making them die in a thousand grisly ways. Here is a real example of cruel women. They now sustained their pursuit until our men were out of reach.

From there they turned to the village which had already been plundered.

When they could do no more damage they went on to mount the horses, which were grazing without order, pretending – as a joke, pretending to be their owners. Some fought, some fled; some chased the fugitives, some lay down feigning death, while others tried to run but could not do so. Thus those happy people amused themselves, continuing their obnoxious work until the sun radiated over the hills, and the General arrived with the main body of the soldiers. Some spurred on the rest with great gusto and close embraces; but with others – the more they strove, their brows wrinkled with envy, the more they paraded themselves as the victors. Nobody committing a vile sin against nature could have enjoyed such happiness!

Caupolicán wanted to hold a solemn gathering at that point, to be attended only by the military men of the Araucanian Assembly; with a great show of happiness (without the mass of the people participating – by then they had ceased in their dances, games, pastimes and vices).

When the games and exercises were over, they went to the valley of Arauco, where the soldiers of the entire province gathered at the festival, worn out; there were plenty of opportunities to proclaim supreme deeds of valour from those who had conquered, and to receive prizes worthy of their competitors.

News of the feast was rapidly relayed by diligent messengers, reaching natives, neighbours and strangers. The mass of people gathering there swelled the ranks of warriors who occupied the foreign tents, valleys, mountains, plains and river banks. At the longed-for fortieth day, which everyone desired, the field was restored to its true colour; the vexatious shadows were banished, to be replaced by the bellicose company of energetic youngsters, showing that youthful exuberance and new blood were on the field, ready for the test.

With great solemnity the order of prizes was announced: the first was a shining cutlass, garnished by the skilful hand of a jeweller. That trophy was to be awarded for someone with the firmest arm – wielding a thick, heavy lance, exceeding the others in strength. The next prize was a sallet, made of burnished silver, covered in highly-coloured feathers, surrounded by a circlet of pure gold. Made with exquisite craftsmanship, it was encrusted with various jewels in order to be worthy of a contest between skilful combatants – their skills stretched to their extremities, in a gruelling test, to determine who ruled the field.

A spirited greyhound, its wounds healed, on whom an admirer fixed a collar, with sharp studded points of burnished metal, was the prize for the winner of the race, for those with all the weapons and the speed: the first to reach the flag which fluttered a mile away and defined the appointed distance.

A skilfully-made bow, with its golden quiver which hung from a broad and well-worked sallet, with two big buckles of gold, marked and set apart so that the arrow could be aimed, gaining through skill the rich prize, bearing the curved beak to the parrot. A black, rabid

horse, chomping the reins of his halter was the prize for whoever wielded the baton with the fastest and smoothest hand.

Caupolicán, Grand Master of all the armies, was appointed judge. A fanfare of trumpets summoned the contestants. Scarcely had it made its happy sound when young Orompello, already in position, gracefully cast aside his robe to show off his splendid fit body; in his bold right hand he brandished a sturdy lance. Then there also presented themselves Lepomande, Crino, Pillolco, Guambo and Mareande. These six ran in an equal spin, their lances equalled by the faithful, shaking their right hands simultaneously, were thrown up with six groans. The sticks soared upwards, with an excruciating noise, thrown with great force and impetus; they split the air and rose to the heavens, then fell to the ground with the same fury.

Pillolco's spear was the first to fall to earth – through lack of vigour, then Guambo's, thirdly Lepomande's, fourthly Crino's, fifthly Mareande's, and finally that of Orompello, making the longest path by being thrown with the greatest strength, passing five fathoms forward.

Then another six took lances from those who considered themselves stronger, and although they made strenuous efforts to break the record, they did not succeed. Another six tried, and six more after that, but all, to their shame, lagged behind. So as not to labour the point, I will say that over 100 made the attempt. Nobody could reach Orompello's record of thirty-six feet (six fathoms) until Leucoton, a brawny man – seeing that the contest had simmered down, said in a loud voice: "I have no doubt that I will lose; but because you have all seen me already, I want to see what that arm can do to enable me to reach my star." Having said that, he was rather slow putting the required lance into position. Giving it a light throw, he demonstrated his strength and courage: the lance shot through the air like a great cannonball, or a furious bolt of lightning breaking through thick clouds. It flew rapidly for 8 yards, ahead of the sign and line; the spear broke its point on the hard ground, then lurched on for a great distance.

The crowd raised a cry to the heavens and made a mad rush to see the throw, glorifying the prowess of the thrower. Some measured the great distance on foot and tested the weight of the lance. Some praised the mighty power of the arm as a marvel; others went for the prize; others, again, sang the praises of the winner, proclaiming Leucoton's name in solemn voices. Orompello jumped up, and shuffled through the crowd, saying "Nobody has lost; nor should it be assumed that only the first one has the advantage."

Caupolicán held the pole and stamped out a fire which Tucapel had first ignited; others, with Leucoton, had spread. Caupolicán, as a judge, showing himself impartial, swiftly and discreetly placated Orompello's fury with soothing words. And so he was satisfied with the situation – not arguing about it any more: Leucoton, clutching his cutlass to his side, had the advantage. With that the contest ended. Leucoton, remaining victorious, took to one side Orompello, weary and cowed from the encounter, but shrewdly concealing his feelings,

wanting another opportunity to compete with Leucoton, which could involve a more stringent test.

Orompello was a very worthy man, vigorous since his boyhood, gentle, tractable, easy-going, self-disciplined – and, on occasion, dedicated, courageous – held in high esteem by many because of his dedication and noble lineage – son of Mauropande, cousin and great friend of Tucapel. Having imposed silence and cleared the field for the contest – nimble, courageous Cayeguan pitched himself into the struggle. He had not gone far when, from the other side, with a great swagger, Torquin sallied forth with great strength and agility. They were locked in a struggle involving great skill. Having been given the signal, with measured steps, the two gallant barbarians moved, now joined, now parted, now thrusting their bodies forward, now pulling them back, now hidden on one side, now on the other – without either of them to gaining the edge over his opponent.

Going thus, at one point, Cayeguano put his right leg forward. He wanted to attack Torquin. Putting great force into his right hand, he took on skilful Cayeguan – the body of Torquin remaining in vain, lay with the same weight and strength at the enemy's feet. At this, mighty Rengo presented himself; casting off his clothes, he revealed a stocky body; robust arms, well-developed muscles. He looked at the confused, attentive crowd – for whom, of the four selected, that barbarian was number one – defeated by nobody.

Shaking his shoulders with great force, he presented himself for the challenge and the struggle. He braced himself to grapple with the victor facing him, then went to meet him, burning with energy. Cayeguan came, of his own free will, from the other part into the middle of that field. The two contestants were locked together – each trying to gain the edge. For a while the contest was evenly balanced, and the outcome stood in doubt; but then Reno gave the obvious sign through which his power was revealed; within his hard arms he held sad, open-mouthed Cayeguan. Without ceasing to encourage him, he brought him back and twirled him round, hither and thither.

He wrenched the log from the earth and, holding it tightly, suspended it in the air. Cayeguan, ashen pale, out of breath, opened his arms and stretched his legs. Bold Rengo, waiting for exclusive victory, leaving him to fall down, stamped the log into the ground with a crashing blow.

Unfeeling, they dragged it along and hoisted it onto their shoulders. With loud voices, everyone celebrated Rengo's great strength and prowess. But when the cheers simmered down, they turned their gaze behind him: Talco had appeared, and then taken the position of a contestant. Talco was a great master of contests, with strong limbs and a ferocious countenance; skilful in combat and handling weapons, nimble and energetic, though arrogant. In all the activities listed here Rengo was the freest and strongest. His appearance radiated those robust exercises to which he was accustomed. Talco moved with speed, Rengo expansively; the one showed consummate skill; the other excelled in energy alone. Talco

showed extraordinary agility, though he was less vigilant than Rengo, who made an unexpected jump at Talco, catching his adversary unawares. *Just as the cautious tiger, seeing its tawny prey approach, with its low neck, clumsy and lazy, takes heavy steps, making a growling sound – then, in a flash, furious, makes an intrepid jump at it and, spreading its claws, tightens its grip, presses and squeezes it* – in like manner, Rengo seized Talco, and before Talco could prepare to defend himself, brutally thrust him on the ground, breaking his back. Seeing him then, he defied him; and in his position, hoping that another would come, he turned and left the camp, satisfied with such proof of his mighty strength.

But there was no man so audacious as to dare challenge that barbarian. And so, because night was falling, they postponed the continuation of the contest until the chariot of tomorrow graced the fields with new light – then there sounded various instruments proclaiming the situation from the tables.

Then, next day, the son of Leocan, coming out of his tent, escorted by a crowd, heralded by high-pitched instruments, was taken to the place of contest. Rengo, because his fame was greater, made a circuit around the arena, then entered it, and stood at its centre. For a good two hours, Rengo took the position without which nobody could set foot in the square. No soldier could be seen who was ready to occupy the empty space. But Leucoton, looking at him, wanting his valour to be recognised, hoping to prove the stronger, entered the stockade with heavy steps.

Then a mighty hubbub arose among the crowd, eager to see those two locked together, knowing them to be evenly matched in strength. Leucoton, recognising Rengo, went forward to greet him, his swagger laced with panache. Thus there entered the arena two adversaries who were not equal in strength and tenacity. Now they spurred themselves rapidly on, then they held back their steps and waited; they turned round and looked cautiously, preparing all the tricks. Not standing on their decision, they went straight into a tight embrace.

Clutching breast to breast, they made their final efforts. Firmed up and remaining tightly clasped, they threw each other round in circles, now with their left feet, now their right, nailing and trapping each other; no amount of strength or skill enabled either to prevail. Back and forth they wheeled around each other, each resisting the other's strength; so much did they wrestle, cry and flail each other that their limbs went numb; they trembled with fatigue; their weak knees wobbled, unable to sustain the tenacity and insane fury of two men at the end of their tether.

Drenched in sweat and breathing heavily, the two barbarians went off robed, their two bosoms resounding furiously from their strong, fiery movement, constantly drawing on new strength, with rising passion, to complete the bout that they had commenced, to gain the honour of the sallet. But the known difference between them was not in evidence here; nor was there any sign of weakness; both young men seemed in top shape, on a par in strength, equally well-exercised.

But Rengo's destiny – till then propitious, but now enfeebled, ensured that in spite of himself he would forfeit all rights to the prize and the honour. At one point in the square was a rut, covered by a pebble, shifted from its place by the milling feet of the crowd; weary Rengo had not been warned of this; he put his foot on it and sadly slipped. *Just as a pine tree falls through a firm axe, he came to the ground with no less ado. Never did a ball bounce back so fast from the hard ground; nor did the eagle, swooping on its prey, shoot so powerfully through the air.* Rengo, rabidly blaspheming the heavens, got on his toes, and closed furiously with Leucoton.

Just as in that proud fight the timid Anteo was knocked down by furious Alcides then, picking himself up from Mother Earth, gathered doubled strength and spirit – so did seething Rengo (who had hardly touched the ground in the arena), now emboldened, prevail over his adversary so as to attain the height of honour and strength. Such outrage, vindictiveness and sorrow did he feel – considering his public status – that, fired by rage, his strength was enhanced.

Impatient and furious, he grappled again with Leucoton, who scarcely put up any resistance against him. *You will hear about his success in the next canto.*

Canto XI

(The festivities and contests having been concluded, Lautaro marches on Santiago. Before he reaches his destination the Spanish set upon him; there is a tough battle.)

When hearts unaccustomed to showing any sign of weakness are humiliated in public, they show their mettle and fortify their tired limbs; they despise fatigue and slowness, tackling the hardest challenges with ease.

Thus it was with Rengo who when falling put so much effort into his slide that – blazing with anger, he doubled in breath and strength: and his powerful enemy, hitherto so elusive, he now lifted so high that his feet did not touch the ground.

They struggled on equal terms until their wrath abated. Rengo, suspicious, did not quickly descend from his position on top of the son of Pillano, who carried Caupolicán's rod. Rengo removed the rod from his hand. It was no mean achievement to gain such respect and admiration in such a furore!

Noiselessly Rengo, having left the struggle irritated and inflamed, had his honour restored. But he remained with no right to the prize. He had not yet been selected from the rest, nor the square cleared of people, when young Orompello said quickly: "Touch me again; I have been chosen." He messed himself up shouting like that, longing for that desired time – seeing that Leucoton was keeping going and had not forgotten the throw of the lance. With elegant confidence he jumped over the fence and entered the stockade; in the middle of the square, as I say, he knocked down his adversary – body to body.

The din and grumbles were growing, because the people there knew Orompello's resentment of the mighty Leucoton. They feared things were coming to breaking point, but nobody dared defend him before they left the square and occupied the empty places. Most of the people, eager for the struggle, were on Orompello's side. They admired his beautiful limbs and muscular body stripped for action, his grace of movement, his beautiful face and frizzy hair, which showed his youth – at only twenty years old he challenged Leucoton in a trial of strength.

Going by appearances, the spectators judged the respective strengths of the two as ill-matched: seeing in one a great physique, a brave posture, perfect toning and solid experience – and with the other, the slender limbs, the fresh condition and pleasing youthfulness, though the example of Orompello's boldness countered that opinion.

He was put in his place: the vain boast, the sound of the trumpet – *as when a fiery horse is agog for the starting signal and a falcon sees a heron, shiny and white, preening itself on a*

wet river bank, and girds up to swoop on its prey – so gallant Orompello ached for that happy signal to proceed. Then, sensing the lateness, he imagined that the referees had put obstacles in his path. Seeing that things were getting so protracted, wanting to be satisfied according to his taste, he headed straight for Leucoton, who was not slow to react. The vain noise subsided; all those present remained silent. Hand-to-hand the two bold contestants rushed forward to test each other. As when the whippet and the proud mastiff, showing their teeth with raucous growls, their fur bristling and their eyes afire, came enraged to bite – so did the two muzzled ones, not hoping for a trumpeter or a godfather, stimulated by courage and rancour, take up the struggle from beginning to end. And in an instant equal, clinging to each other with extreme force and sound judgement, they flexed their powerful arms, throwing their knotty bows to their feet. Their extraordinary strengths, though equal, lifted them, threw them, turned them, seeing them at such times that they appeared to be nailed to the ground. They left the imprints of their feet in the earth, digging into the hard ground, locked together, knees knocking against each other, making their bones and rib-cages creak. They used all the courage, skill and passion they could summon up – each sensing the hard tenacity and extraordinary strength which radiated from his bold rival. The two returned to the struggle without recognising an improvement in anybody. They both careered hither and thither; then the two joined together, giving themselves to the earth.

Their fall was rapid, and they picked themselves up just as fast – one could almost say at the bat of an eyelid, so that even the sharpest observer could not sense it. It was then impossible to concede the advantage to either party. Leucoton knelt on the ground, and Orompello, with one hand, dragged him back. They resumed the struggle in argument, putting forward their reasons, arguing their case. The other people took sides, multiplying the argument and noise – some giving the prize, honour and glory to the one – some according victory to the other.

Tucapel – seated to the right of Pillano's son, saw what was happenin. In a flash he leapt into the square, sword in hand, and with his customary boldness, said: "The prize goes to Orompello, and whoever thinks he is up to disputing my vote – we are in the field: let him come forward with his challenge!"

Leucoton snarled arrogantly: "I will tame your mad spirit, your vanity and frivolity! I've been longing to do so for ages!"

"As we have begun the contest you must sort that out with me", said Orompello.

Leucoton, proud and vigorous, replied "I want to have it out with you alone."

Caupolicán came down from the supreme seat; seeing the confused situation, he interceded. Knowing that the great Caupolicán was coming, Leucoton and Orompello suppressed their ill feelings. Each went off to his corner, but Tucapel, twirling his mace, full of devilish rage and not wanting a reconciliation, broke silence, but called everyone to the contest. None of the

pleas and mediation, from the son of Leocan nor from the other people, that he was setting a trap for Orompello – the winner and the bravest, were of any avail. Then they freely left him in the stockade with Leucoton, where this dispute would be decided – with one contender losing his life. Thrust into this Corner, Caupolicán, articulated by anger, said “I expect you to observe the respect due to my person and my position”. Tucapel replied “I promise that I will not step down from the contest because of fear; let whoever enters it do what he can, of his own free will.

“Have respect, if you consider my declaration to be just – and if you can evaluate the case dispassionately, with a cool head. But if, against reason, you pervert the course of justice, I shall not lose one iota of my authority over you and your positions.”

Losing patience, Caupolicán moved determinedly to Tucapel. But the experienced Colocolo – who generally used to take the sideline because of fear, put up a strong resistance, saying: “Sir, have you so forgotten about your authority and our safety that you can raise your right hand alone? You see that everything is at risk, and that the differences are so great. You know the madness of Tucapel and the strength he has inherited. Who ever can persuade him to change his attitude will do so through sound judgement, not the shedding of innocent blood. Give Orompello the designated prize, and another, of equal value, to his competitor.

“If through rigour and a bloody end, you want to put at risk the one who remains – given that up above, on a firm foundation, Fortune, now smiling on you, turns its wheel, and then youthful fury and boldness allows you to inflict harm with impunity – here it will leave you, sapping your strength and shrinking your authority. If you lose two swords, as well as two men who have extended the power of Arauco, and made its name feared even more among proud, distant nations – if now you have been flouted, remember those other occasions on which they have served you, spilling the blood of the enemy as well as their own.”

The old man’s zeal and reasoning made an impression on Caupolicán. Restraining his anger, he said “I take this counsel; I leave everything in your hands”. With such a resolution, the old man, seeing the open path and the equipment, talked to Leucoton, and then to his predecessors, in the same way. Then the old man persuaded them that in a situation of such discord, those who could not make sense of it should accept his discretion and sound advice. But it was on condition that the sallet be awarded as a prize to Orompello. Arrogant Orompello duly received the sallet. At the same time a garnished cuirass of fine gold was presented to Leucoton. With everybody else, they partook of a happy feast at the copious tables, where they pledged their friendship.

When the meal was over and the tables had been removed, the rest of the day was spent in rejoicing – forming rings for dancing, joined in by a large number of boys and women in festive mood. Now that the contests had ceased the people were careful not to ask questions. When night closed the horizon and swathed the world in black shadow, the leading men of

the land assembled in an antique square, to discuss matters of war. In that discourse they emphasised that the indignities they suffered had to be remedied with blood.

They decreed that the desired mission should be allocated to the son of Pilano, and that he should determine the numbers involved. So high was the opinion of that Araucanian, and so much had his credit and fame increased, that if he had promised to devastate the heavens, the people would have given credence to his pledge. From the most mature of the young were chosen fifty – vigorous men, strong and silent. And there were so many requests and impassioned pleas to go that day, that there was no excuse or impediment against increasing the band by a hundred. Those chosen by Lautaro were soldiers, friends of unrest, used to hard toil, perverse, dissolute and seditious, set on all manner of evil doing, eager for booty and gain – murderous, bloodthirsty, menacing – thieves, bandits and desperadoes.

With these ‘good’ people he proceeded to Maule. All the lands he passed through, threatening fire and the sword, yielded without resistance, submitting to his mandate. The chiefs freely offered him service, weapons, food, clothing and men. The barbarians destroyed the villages and towns; they seized food, houses and estates so that their inhabitants fled in terror. None of the locality was spared. There were rapes, adulteries, endless acts of violence.

It was the time of total war where everything was at risk; they never relented in their yearning to get to grips with our men.

Indian traders came bearing the sad news to the city. Rumours and noise circulated; the bellicose hubbub revived, although some who contemplated the situation could not credit such news. They said it was sheer madness to think that such an unruly squadron with so few men, so far from base, so isolated, would ever dare to undertake such an expedition, let alone against such an eminent state. But those who set out from Penco thought more of inflicting damage than of making noise. The spirited youngsters favoured taking the warpath at once; others thought it foolhardy to venture on perilous paths in dangerous places. But everything was prepared with speed; those astute objections fortified the people, and they despatched all the runners at once.

This was under a diligent commander who appreciated the numbers and intentions of the people. However, for him to use his barbarian squadron effectively he had to know the lie of the land, and so gave a free hand to two soldiers to gain intelligence. As I do not have full details of the operation, I will briefly say that they set off. On the 4th day, in strong spirits, they made a dawn attack on the enemy camp. In the ensuing struggle the barbarians prevailed, without great effort. Our survivors, with care and nimble feet, returned to bear the news.

Breathless, exhausted, afflicted, they returned weary, bloodstained, lacerated with wounds – pretty solid evidence of how they had been ripped apart, utterly defeated by the strength of those powerful barbarians — with the loss of one man who rushed forward, defiantly, into the middle of the field, and died at Lautaro’s hands. They say that he had erected a wall, where

was received by his people, and that huge numbers greeted him, from whom he chose the bravest and most skilful. He also said that there were sufficient provisions each day, and accumulated a stock of munitions, proclaiming from afar that they would soon descend on the city.

Those who had hitherto dismissed these utterances as raving nonsense, certainly gave it credence after such a signal – an icy fear freezing their blood. Now they recognised Lautaro's power, some were overcome with anguish; others, with ardent and vigorous hearts, clamoured to join battle. Without more ado, they took to the road on his orders, heading for the coast. They set off in such a rush that they came to the curved bank of the clear river which turned behind them in a wide circle, and then ran directly into the sea.

Within half a league he chose a position to lodge his men. In the best, clearest light he headed forth to reach his destination by nightfall. At any moment there could be a sudden noise, and they would be surrounded by guards and sentries, not knowing exactly what was going on, crying "To Arms! Action Stations!" Lautaro identified our men for himself knowing how they had got there. He estimated their numbers then turned, without being detected by anybody and, to show that his low esteem for them, made his horses jump with more fury and vigour.

He said "If you do not deceive me, you do not have to know that I am Lautaro – who has inflicted so much damage on you, damage which can never be repaired. But because they do not consider me as a foreigner, and the envoy that has come here is better known, knowing whom they are to encounter. I want this mare to bear the news."

He had gained ten horses in the last skirmish, the best of them saddled and reined. On sound advice he released one of them. That fierce steed, feeling menaced, took a turn towards the Spanish camp, on the tracks and scent of the other horses, and that was the opportunity to agitate them. It came with such sound and fury as to give more strength and fire to the weapons. The hidden people got up with a start; there was great restlessness. After all the jeering, laughter and games, there was not so much uproar when they saw that an animal, in this way, could stir them to arms.

They had a sleepless night until daybreak when – spiritedly and with firm resolve to conquer or die, they ventured forth from their post against the proud Araucanians, who were no less determined to put their swords to effect. Lautaro had issued an edict that whoever strayed one step outside the wall should be considered a hardened criminal and a rebel; he should die without more ado – fear should restrain daring.

However volatile the situation became, it broke neither the reins of obedience nor the power of his authority. The barbarian was shadowed by the walls; he did not want to venture far. Lautaro wanted to make his pitch more certain, by surrounding our men, in such a way that

they could not make use of open country; without a clear path for their fleet horses they would have to rely on their strength, spirit and skill in arms alone.

So that was the order: attacking the square, at the time of wounding, they turned, the barbarians escaping our swords because they intermingled with our men. Some returned from far away; before the Christians knew what was happening, they negotiated the doors of the enclosure and fought in a restricted area. Through such a ruse, the Indians saw the Spanish coming and when they appeared, greeted them with a terrible hue and cry. Proudly, they threatened them with scorn and gallantry, some brandishing hefty pikes, others raising ironed maces.

Just like bulls coming to fight, when those surrounding them, secure on their wooden platforms taunted them with catcalls, their arms sharpened by the damage they have done, menacing them without fear – so did the Araucanians to the Spanish from the wall. The Spaniards, always looking as if they were on a small hunting expedition, marched forward, step by step, thinking of razing the fort enclosure to the ground, crying in high voices: “Neither the wall, nor the pikes, nor the hard maces are enough to prevent the deaths merited by the abominable outrages you have committed.”

Having come to a short distance from the fort, well recognised in every part; they attacked and destroyed its bulwark. Then they considered their work to be completed. The majority of the barbarians escaped, reaching the open doors with great glory, singing of victory in high voices. It would not have been such a happy story if the first Indians had waited until the last of their number had reached the gates. But coming in, without suffering and unable to restrain themselves, they renewed their attack; giving the signal they did not have to give, they made the fugitives return.

As a horse runs when it has forgotten the mares which stay behind, and their resting place, as it neighs and whinnies in guilt and panic, loosens the course, pricks up its ears, alerted to his rider. The horse turned without a signal from its rider. In that way the barbarians, fleeing with signs of fear (though feigned) affirmed their rapid steps, hearing the familiar happy and certain sign, and in wielding, against our men, crude swords apparently worn out, they turned with a fury so terrible that the ground trembled from its horrible sound. Just as on a choppy sea the heavy waves follow the path of a gentle wind, and with a convulsive movement, recalcitrant Coro suddenly jumps up so that they are swept from the areas of calm to the top of a whirlpool, whose swollen waves follow tempestuous Coro – so did our people, who dogged their path relentlessly. The sudden change disrupted their happiness and sense of victory so that, without pulling themselves together, they violently turned round on the same path, with fortified souls, to take their stand against the mass facing them ahead. But as a famous, swollen river, breaking its banks, floods a rough path, uprooting trees, as with an unrestricted roll it carries all ahead of it, and the hard rocks are loosened, wrenched up by the furious waters – with just such violence the Indians poured themselves on our men – surging,

uninterrupted, they swept them along in a furious current until, with lightning fury, they threw them from the stockade so that mortal fear drove them into the open plain.

With greater confidence and surer steps the struggling Spaniards at the entrance turned into a cloud of dust, sallying forth from the narrow circle and the palisade; the barbarians went for them again, one people amassed against another – without losing a point, they wounded hands and feet as much as they could. Neither the raised parapet, nor the portholes which had been dug deep into the tower, nor the wooden breastwork fixed with strong rattans, could halt the course of the nimble horses, fiercely spurred, running to the rescue as if they were flying in the wind. The Spaniards, in headlong flight, left the square to the enemy, who, sensing favourable Fortune, hounded them with swift hands and feet. But our men, in dread of death, always extended their march and pressed onwards, sometimes doing weak rearguard actions against their powerful, furious enemy. They had run a full league from the deserted: Lautaro did not pursue them – full of anger and raging pain, seeing the small support on the field ruled by that mighty tide, so powerful was the rich sound of the horn that those in the vanguard, without running further, rallied.

He was so impatient and annoyed that no one dared to look him in the face. He retired alone into his bell tent, and ordered a new edict to be proclaimed: that no warrior should venture one step away from the ditch, even if the Spanish should return and attack the fort 1,000 times. He called an assembly of his soldiers. Though seething inside, he spoke temperately, saying: “Friends, we are deluding ourselves if we think that we can raze the high walls of such an eminent city. The fruits of diligence are far stronger than the temerity of proud Mars. Such structures repress ardent souls and strengthen the weak. Industry oppresses untamed necks and domesticates them by force. That redeems honour and recoups losses, allowing us time to use our resources so that scrupulous diligence and fortune go hand in hand. Let us beat a retreat, giving them the impression that we are only withdrawing because of fear, and lull the Spanish into a false sense of security, by looking as if we are leaving the honour and the field to them. Then, returning after a time, we will do what hitherto was difficult for us, with them holding the field, and with the fortified city as their nearby den.”

When the son of Pillan had spoken, the Spanish band appeared; with renewed strength and daring they tried their hand a second time. There was such happiness and merriment when the barbarians saw our men appear on the field. They yelled and clapped their hands with contentment. In this way they had surrounded the Christians. Little by little, they prepared for battle, setting off at the right moment, the barbarians advanced, some holding their maces on high, some swinging their pikes, their bodies in a tight phalanx, needling the bellicose army.

Some came to the broad doors and started their hard fighting, their heads well helmeted. Some reached the guarded gate while others scoured the areas they knew for a suitable ascent, the safest route. The Spanish band filled up the deep cellar, and the Araucanians occupied the wall surrounding it. But the Spaniards, covered with strong shields, daringly withstood the rain of blows and the sharp points of the lances. So great, so gruesome was the

harmony of yells and the thick beating of crude blows that Maule, confused by the noise resounding from the tower, restrained its rapid course.

At the front and the side doors the garrison defended the wall; there the Araucanians, with piles of stones, knowing where things were more dangerous, struck swift blows on their enemy, attacking with such terrible force that shields and armour afforded little protection against them. Our men retreated, driven by blows and missiles; others turned round, aroused by anger and indignation. They strongly resisted Fortune, but they were already badly wounded, weak, exhausted, their bodies drained of blood, but their weapons drenched in it.

Courage and wrath always exacerbate damage and tribulation. The Spanish always showed the greatest strength and decisiveness in the blows they struck; they attacked without fear of death. But this courage counted for very little when each the most lightly injured had bled from six wounds. The barbarian people were amazed to see what our people had suffered from the heavy blows, arrows and stones which had ceaselessly rained down on them in the course of three attacks. Then the impatient enemy clenched their fists and teeth. And like a tempest which never relented before surging into furious growth, making thick hailstones tear the roves while the wind struggled on – so the proud barbarians, spurred by shame and the urge for revenge, throwing lances, darts and stones, made feints and ruses, beating against armour and sallets. Unable to suffer this terrible travail, the exhausted Christians beat an inexorable retreat from their vain attempt to recover the impregnable square and the ravaged field, scene of their wretched fate. With stifled, dampened spirits they went back the way they had come. That night, they set up camp at the foot of a mountain – in an area safe from the enemy; no one came in pursuit of them.

After describing the extraordinary caution of Lautaro, I feel weak, exhausted, snoring; however, my voice will be strengthened in the next Canto.

Canto XII

(Lautaro, having gathered his strength, does not want to follow up his victory to hold up the Spaniards. There are discussions with Marco Veaz, through which Pedro de Villagran comes to understand his peril, raises camp and beats a retreat. The Marquis of Canete comes to the city of Los Reyes in Peru.)

It is a great virtue and a gruelling test of anyone's character to keep a dangerous secret which is bound to be fraught with difficulty – however safe, secure and profitable it may seem. Generally, small gain and great harm comes from the useless vice of damaging talk: take the example of the murderers of Libico and others for whom careless talk cost lives.

One can see, with ones own eyes and in writings now past and present – cruelty, ruin, misadventure, infamy, reprisals for sins, major blunders at crucial points, loss of lives and estates – all through giving an indiscreet person the burden of a secret. The most damaging of vices is that of not keeping a secret bottled up until the proper time – failure to do finally wipes out all the good that has been done, takes away the strength which diligence has built up; it ignites war, fury, discord and fire, brings ruin to friends and rightful owners.

After great deliberation Lautaro implemented his carefully laid-out plan. He left in his own time, and turned again on our men – who, by firm agreement, had that day moved 3 leagues onward, timidly holding their position. For two days the Spanish waited, prepared for the assault; but the barbarians never showed up, nor did anyone appear from the other band. Finally two of our men ventured forth, to go round the fort and observe it; they heard a voice from the wall telling them “Come: we will give you protection”. One called him by his name, promising security. On leaving the other, he came to know who the bold one was. The Spaniard got as far as the moat, then he could recognise the voice: it was the gallant son of Pillano, whom he once considered as a brother. He was lying bedecked in a shiny breastplate, garnished with gold plating, transfixed by the iron tip of a thick pike; the broad, hard plate and the pike's shaft of were bloodstained; a sallet of bright steel was opened up and dented in a thousand places.

When the Spaniard had come into earshot, gallant Lautaro told him: “Marcos, I despise you and your ignorant company who blindly assume that you are strong enough to disrupt me and make me change my plan. What insane fury drives on your urge to tyrannise this land? Can't you see that everything is in my hands – your good and harm, peace and war? Don't you see the numbers and strength of the Araucanians in the field? Can't you sense that the mere sound of them strikes terror in any heart? In the villages you were not strong enough to defend your own possessions – *just like frightened birds, facing lions in your nests*. In the deserted, stony fields you think of erecting bell tents – when you are most terrified, and your enemies most vigorous. I think it is reckless madness to want to stand against us, since neither by art, skill, or in any other way could you harm us. If you want to quit with honour,

this present havoc is enough to teach you your lesson: fresh blood is still flowing from the wounds and dyeing the grass red.

“I will never cease pursuing you; I shall not flinch from my oath. I will follow you to the centre of Spain: that I promised to the Great Senate. But if you cut down the time to do what you have to do here, you will be absolved from judgment, and spared from perdition.

“The terms of the treaty are that each year you donate 30 beautiful virgins; they must be Spanish – fair-skinned, blond, beautiful, well proportioned, aged between 15 and 20, without guile. After them 30 capes of fine green cloth, and then 30 purple ones, garnished with fine gold thread; also 12 powerful horses, newly and richly saddled, broken in to the reins, but nimble and fiery; to these you must add 6 sturdy greyhounds, fattened by hunting. Only that tribute will prevent what the world cannot halt.”

The Castilian listened attentively, savouring the rhetoric. But when he heard the terms proposed, he could stand no more and turned impatiently on the barbarian. “Do not be so proud as the pariahs you are leading, O Lautaro! They will cost you dearly. As tribute for your mad audacity the Spanish will pay you in crude death, and bitter torment. We will cover Arauco in eternal mourning.”

Lautaro replied: “You’re talking hot air. I’m not arguing with you any more, Marcos. It is weapons, strength and courage – not words, which will settle this issue. You are free to say anything you like; your right to do so is protected. Having done so you can do what you can, and I what I have decided. We can talk about other pleasant things; let each one take his time – let us show, in the present time, a good span of horses. Because you are not safe, you can give us horses, and show my subjects how to train them.” Thus spoke Lautaro, and from the wall he ordered that six of his hardest vassals should ride the horses past him. At each of the two bridges, six horsemen rode out simultaneously, painted with broad stripes, big lances in their hands, dressed in stiff tabards, their hair Afro style, their coats pulled down to their hips, sleeves rolled up to their elbows.

In an elegant sweep, they made two turns in front of the attentive Spaniard, but did not move him from his post before, with an arrogant gesture, at the top of his voice that all could hear (for the wall was full of men), he spoke freely to Lautaro:

“It is in vain, O Captain – whoever thinks he can frighten me with wild deeds, I hold him in no greater esteem than a straw, nor can boarding frighten me one iota. And to show that I hold the advantage, I want to prove myself against the six; you will see that I will be enough for 1,000: let them come forward for the test!”

Lautaro replied: “Marcos, if you are prepared to die to show your strength and spirit, the least that you can get from them will be that they come on foot, as a challenge, in the way you want. Choose your weapons; name your battlefield. Have the contest – either armed or unarmed – fighting with feet, fists, fingernails and teeth!”

The Spaniard retorted: "I tell you that my honour forbids me to punish them one by one – because my people say that no barbarian would dare to enter single combat with me. Therefore, if you do not agree to what I want, I will not accept the other part."

They did not come to an agreement about this, and then they had to discuss other matters; but the time having come to depart, the two of them took their leave of the barbarian. Having started on their path they heard someone calling them; recognising the familiar voice, they turned round: it was Lautaro.

"I forgot one reason: my people are desperate, deprived of the necessities of life – because of bad government there is a shortage of food. Since you have a surplus, you could make a generous redistribution, providing us from it. In my opinion this would enhance your honour and glory.

"It is a time-honoured custom in distinguished states, and a respected law among good soldiers to feed the forces of the enemy – as it strengthens their degree of control. Marcos, pay heed to what I say: you would earn praise if you could say you had fed the defeated forces – that would be a great triumph for you. I have doubts about what can be called victory, when the opposite assumes such extreme proportions – so that what is beyond the reach of courage can be achieved by wretched hunger. This can weaken, tame, hold back the strong, brawny, indomitable arm – and so, in a base and narrow way, weakness can seem to be strength."

It was his intent, which he thought to be necessity – faked, certainly, in order that our people would be moved to make an effort, opening the door to falsehood, inducing what he hoped for, covering up his cunning, until he gained the goals of his shrewd deceit. Marcos, moved by his words, said: "Just for those reasons you have put to me, I promise to try and procure everything in my power." Then straight away he and his companion grasped the reins of their horse, and rode until they reached the Spanish camp. There Marcos told Villagra what Lautaro had said; he was suspicious – confused and surprised by this request for provisions. Villagra was wise, zealous and prudent; reconsidering the story, understanding the secret designs, and the dangerous situation at this juncture; he decided on a rapid remedy. When the world was in darkness he, amazed at the clever plot, took the path to the secure city. But he took no heed of our people. *I wish now to describe the strange nature of the ingenious new ruse.*

Dawn had scarcely broken when the barbarians suddenly vanished without trace – seeing clearly that at the end of the day, in a short space of time, they could do such slaughter on the Christians that none of the latter could wield a lance for a while.

This site was a low, secluded plain, well provided with irrigation ditches. Broken from the start, the terrain sinks into a lake and a great marsh; the earth is deep, unsteady, flooded, empty, spongy and unstable. If the trenches burst, the fields would be waterlogged. Horses

could not be ridden there – they would be blocked up by sticky mud where, if they remained, they could be seized like fattened birds. With speed and efficiency Lautaro had put his ruse into action.

Sad at their departure the force, with a squadron of infantry, set off rapidly on the same day on the direct route to Arauco. They returned, and with heavy hearts weighed up the various pros and cons. Nobody got the advice or excuse he was looking for. Discussing things among themselves, they expressed their suspicions, saying: “What would suffice to free me from this guilt? Don’t I claim responsibility for the burden that has been laid on me? Who but myself can suffer when everything has been guided by my hand? Am I the one who promised to conquer the world from pole to pole in one year?”

“While I, with such clear-minded people, could not see the Spanish wall, the moon, making three orbits, has seen our disordered camp: the splendid chariot of Phaeton has travelled from Scorpio to Aquarius; in the end we will be mauled, with the loss of 100 soldiers. If you have confidence that shame can be assuaged through death, my weak arm will suffice to pierce my heart with this lance, but it will give greater vengeance from me and glory to the enemy if he thinks that you fear his powerful arm more than my feeble, cowardly and timorous one.”

“I swear to the eternal, infernal power that, if death does not claim me within one year, I shall expel the Spanish government from Chile and soak all the land in blood. Neither exhaustion, heat nor bitter winter shall break the thread of war; within this land no Spaniard shall be safe from me.”

He also made a solemn vow never to return to his comfortable nest, not to shield or repair himself from the action of the elements – water, sun night air and wind, nor to engage in any happy activities until the world learned from Lautaro that he would not undertake any difficult operations without bringing them to an honourable conclusion. With this, it seemed that he loosened that cord of sorrow which oppressed him so hard and heavily, bringing him near to losing his mind. So fierce Lautaro set forth. On his way, as the hoped-for time approached, he stayed on a plain by the sea. Then he made a strong movement under the great Mount Itata, crossing that shadowy expanse with an arc-like movement, grave and expansive, as the trees called him to contentment, the wind sighed amorously, dodging among the fresh flowers, red, blue, white and yellow. Seven leagues from the coast lies this fertile land, abundant and capable of sustaining men of war.

On its eastern edge are the high mountains from which the Itata rapids descend to give their tribute to the salt sea. This was the time for the Spaniards; but the promised Fate was already broken, as Fortune seemed to be on the Araucanians’ side. This designated district measured twenty-two leagues across, but it had attained such high prestige that the whole nation respected it. This land brought the energetic Spaniards down to the ground; it enabled the humble, sad and fearful to rise up against the heavens: powerful foreign people lived in fear of it – ones far away, neighbours and foreigners submitted to its laws.

Then Lautaro, desiring the flower of the state, came to this land, extremely belatedly for anyone who liked to sustain hope. But that for which he was not really hoping happened quite quickly. Pressed by time, he gathered his valiant horde; before they marched off he made these brief points:

“Friends: if you think that the desire to fight, without caution, and the fiery urge that I see in you, is the foundation of victory – know that I am utterly convinced that conquest is in your hands, and that I would not take one step backwards if the earth covered my body. *But difficult objectives are not achieved by enthusiasm alone* – what will measureless effort achieve if we only have limited forces? Yet if these forces are well directed, they will make easy work of great hardship and difficulties.

“How often have we seen credit lost in wretched exile, through having vainly bared our breasts to enemy steel. This is not courage; it is brash, mad stupidity. True courage lies in discipline; being brave without order is lunacy.

“In this encounter, on that great day, we destroyed ourselves through our exertions. It was because we were unobservant, just followed the longings of our blind appetite; in order not to lose, by potential fury, our advantages of time and position – we must not leave the Spaniards, or anything else, to chance. If, on entering the fort, you report some suffering, your efforts will be applauded. Then we met no enemy; they were absent from the city. Those people who went far away – we arranged their fate so that time and death should not devour them.

“To keep control I must order you to resist any urge to move before you are called. You will not swerve for a moment from my purpose, nor will you go ahead with what has not been ordered; for the disobedient and foolhardy there will be an exemplary, unprecedented punishment. We will turn to where our valour showed itself of small account, through being badly regulated – to the faith which you have, raising your right hand, restored to primary honour – or else the field will be flooded in our own blood, and we will have to leave it as pasture for brutal wild beasts and dirty birds of prey.”

So his speech ended; the trumpet sounded to arouse the men, giving a new beginning to the day, travelling with its customary speed. On their way, they came upon a farmyard; Mataquito, while entering on the right, met a barbarian on the road, who told Lautaro of the people who were coming.

He confirmed under oath that their coming was known in Mapocho; the news had spread, now by the wind, now by attentive spies: he added that the city was already provided with ample provisions, equipment, arms and munitions. Having fully informed Lautaro of that, he toned down his initial proposal of making the attack with such a small force. He thought making that change would unite his people, and that there could be a rapid, firm agreement among those in the valley, to reinforce him with skill and care. With the prize (which I have

mentioned) put inside, and the site well prepared, this place was swiftly fortified by a ditch and a strong wall.

People had come to hear of this, and were greedy for loot. I have to gloss over these details; I'll just say there was a mighty uproar among the multitude.

It was known for sure in the city that in full fury, the son of Pillano, leading a crack squadron, came upon it – the shock alerted the Castilian people and threw them into confusion – their blood, which fear had frozen, was now heated with ardent courage. They rushed energetically to arms. Those whom the years had weighed down with diligence and sound advice, repaired the ground and the weak parts. After them, 30 sprightly young men, under a shrewd general, were at the ready. With some friendly Indians they set about tracking down the enemy.

At that time Villagra did not reside among the agitated Spanish people. Taking the road of Arauco, he had left for La Imperial. They returned with reinforcements, with thick tree trunks and faggots, joining those surrounded by the barbarians. They did not know what they would be staying the night.

When the bright, fresh dawn came and the new day broke they saw, on the top of a hill, a large concentration of barbarians – which gave them some indication of their nearby camp and the numbers gathered in it; the young man knew it well, for he had come to rob from it.

The Spaniards learned from the Indian how many hostiles were there, and what tribes were gathered as the crucial time approached. Our captains were not frightened by this news, especially when they learned that our army was only a day's journey away. Villagran asked him if he could get to the watchtower. Smiling, the Indian replied that he should be excused from making that attempt, because of the site which it commanded, because it was protected by swords and surrounded by a rocky ridge. Villagran told him: "I insist that you guide me on this path, and find the route through the high mountains where I wish to venture on this mission. If Lautaro's camp is there and you can lead me to it in the night, you will be rewarded for your labours. If you lie, you will be consigned to the flames."

Without fear the barbarian replied: "I swear to take you there in less than one night, by a difficult but safe route. But mark my words: your people and your allies cannot be assured of reaching Lautaro. If you go there, you will only succeed in hobbling through to civilian deaths – from a thousand causes."

The terror conveyed by the Indian did not shake Villagra – seeing that he offered his opinion without fear, he seemed to be telling the truth. To the people of the village, who were approaching, he despatched a diligent messenger – in order that, at a convenient point, they should make a rapid junction. Then, next day, assembled there, they set off in quest of the barbarians. Throughout the night they did not cease spurring on their horses.

I was not myself present at most of the actions I have described up to now. Out of prudence I did not rely exclusively on the testimonies of fractional witnesses. I have learned about the same aspects from both sides: in all justice I will present only (a) those parts on which all are agreed, and each accepts the other's version, and (b) those where disagreement is minimal.

There is plenty of evidence to support my assertion that much blood was split. But before proceeding I have to get my historical facts better authenticated. Then I will be able to discuss it as if I were a witness, who was fully present on the day, without getting blinded by passion about what happened, without taking from anyone else what was rightfully his. Having set foot in this land, I have not trodden anywhere without my footsteps being feared. *There was never a blow or a stab where I could not identify the victim.* I can be excused for the minor errors I have made. When the mind has so much to absorb, it can sometimes get confused and forget the hilt of the sword.

If anything has impelled me – with my poor talent and clumsy pen, to write, it is that never did so much valour perish, nor did time consume it so unjustly. It moved me that I was able to depict it, however presumptuous it might seem. This is for sure, in view of my limited ability and the narrowness of my real grasp of the situation. Here there is ample testimony to my limited fluency. I cannot be prolific. I present the truth unadorned by artifice, so that it appears more convincing. But if this practice becomes a flaw, I beg you to be merciful: in this part there can be seen my intention – to verify and then convey the facts.

Although the beard has not grown on my face, and my pen so dares to write that I lose credibility, so little is due to my years. I hope, sir, that my just zeal and the cause which moves me will be respected – and that my motivation is taken into account – so as to allow me some margin for error.

* * *

I want to leave Arauco for a while. It is important, for my narrative, to give some attention to Peru, although it is far away from my immediate area of concern. This is to help make things more comprehensible, by putting them into context. I will leave Lautaro for a while, in order briefly to describe the people who were preparing to move against him.

The Marquis of Canete had arrived at the famous city of Los Reyes – sent as a Viceroy of the great Charles V for the protection and maintenance of his laws. The Marquis was famous in these parts, where two Viceroys had been sentenced to death for reckless acts of insurrection. The new one, sensing the passions and evils introduced by custom, set his mind on alterations – covered up by protestations of loyalty; the offences, insults and betrayals committed so shamelessly, seeing that the tyrant's body was not stinking; though dead, he was being boiled up again. He entered the scene shrewd and suspicious, not baring the knife and hard steel, which at that time was dangerous. He made a notable gesture in rejecting it: showing himself to be benign and loving, taking his power into the hills to confront malice, to strengthen and empower justice.

Canete arranged to cleanse everywhere of evil. With his emergency powers he dismissed the Justices in all the cities and replaced them with ones under his authority. These were people whom he understood to have good qualities, respectful of God, King and country, efficient in discharging their duties. He diverted the people, kept them happy with a general handout. Naturally the most guilty, rooted in the old regime, hoped for the greatest reward. Meanwhile, the Marquis devoted himself to extending the many-sided effects of this error which not only punished the guilty, but retried cases which had been pardoned: when they thought that their misdemeanours had been covered up by the passage of time, they were reopened with public announcement, and punishments imposed. Almost all those who had transgressed were executed, but those with more strength and power had followed the tyrant's banner.

Sir, I do not condemn those who were to die, but then were pardoned and freed when they were in a condition to serve you, and later had their sentences reduced. They renounced the errors of their past when they received your great clemency. It is for you alone, sir, to judge them; you alone can acquit or convict them.

I cannot give my judgment here; I always withhold it in matters of honour. I can only mention the extraordinary terror which the Marquis then put into the people's hearts at that bitter time, with his penalties, leaving the kingdom bewildered and confused, so dubious about the reckless act, which everyone could see as dangerous. Whoever was found guilty was exiled from Peru: this was the affront felt most acutely by the people, that which most tried their patience. They had a sense of justice, wishing to lead honest lives. They fearfully ransacked their consciences, seeing the rigour of an angry justice which had already drawn its sword. Some captains and soldiers who had served with distinction in the war and hoped to be rewarded, suspecting that they would be insulted and deported from the kingdom, sent payments in the name of the powerful and sovereign king.

This put the people into even greater anxiety – not knowing the precise reasons for the deportation, nor whether they were just or unjust, they felt constrained to keep a terrified silence. They feared the fury and rigour then in force and, not daring to enquire about the reasons, held on to whatever rumours they heard; but they could not bear any more of the noise. Mute fear and confusion prevailed; the people rushed around, bewildered; nobody asked what was the real, hidden reason. It seemed folly to ask. In order to know, people looked at each other, and the most aware shrugged their shoulders, fearing that the blow of present fury could seem like an accident.

It was a deed so great, so wise, so daring that few, with reason, resisted it; highly celebrated at those times, by those free souls – through him Peru, rebellious and arrogant, was subdued, and the path to justice secured – with greater hopes for the future. Thus Peru was fitted with a bridle whose reins would never break, forcing the ambitious and power-hungry to be contented with their estates alone. He tamed unrest and chaos into contentment and tranquillity. As later experience proved, little remained out of order.

Whoever formerly could not imagine being content with an income of 20,000-30,000 pesos was now forced to recognise that he should be grateful for his life. Then the Marquis made handouts among the notables, fit to strengthen the fallen souls and give greater torment to the lost ones. With such examples and events one can see how mistaken they were, that buildings were erected on unstable ground and fragile foundations. The weakness of their bases is obvious – when we see them shaken to the ground, we panic and cry out in terror, fleeing their fall as best we can.

Oh vain error! Oh stupid disorder of the ignorant fool who does not see the danger, the precarious path that he is treading – being a blatant example, at a cost to others, so that the arm of his most constant friend has to spill its blood to save him, thereby washing the stain of guilt from his sword! I never want this to be falsely sustained for treacherous men. I want the fast-moving wind to afflict them, for its sound to change and disturb them: then, when the king's voice is heard, its sound is not so hard and bitter to the ears. Let his name alone be strong enough to crush and break their bones. Let fortune show him some happiness, mixed in with so many troubles – his suspicion, this nastiness, this sad life so well concealed. It is really hard to die at every moment, to live in fear of that which one has most trusted – that a life once free and protected should be subjected to such a sword.

Swearing allegiance to the king, the humblest soldier submits – gaining contentment through diligence, looked after with great care, while his comrades, in his presence, hold their lances erect by his side – and all drawn, above his head, 1,000 swords menace him.

Whatever noises, whatever voices frighten him, whatever secret thought refutes it, if anyone moves his arm or raises his sword, the sad man thinks it is to kill him. The rope is dragged, the bow is drawn? What confidence can reassure him? Then, in spite of what denying the king brings about, he will retain strong faith in a tyrannical rebel.

If it is not enough to see them finished off so quickly, and that no-one remains, and the rolls and terms are published of those who so justly deserve their fate – factions, houses and lineages devastated with the name which stains and mars them, then the obligation with which we were born is enough: that we stay loyal to our king and leader.

Step by step I observed all the dialogue and events that follow; but on such bitter roads no-one can travel blindly, without a guide. The horrendous sound of Mars on fire will keep me on the right path. *Now I am tired, but so secure and confident that I can dare to rest.*

Canto XIII

(When the Marquis de Canete has imposed his Penal Code in Peru, envoys arrive from Chile to ask for his help; having seen their request as legitimate, sends an amphibious expedition to their aid. The end of this Canto describes how Francisco de Villagran, guided by a friendly Indian, came upon Lautaro.)

He who is thrown into danger, escapes it without injury and is free to be imputed, can call himself happy. But he who can evade it altogether I consider to be far more so. Although danger defines perfection, whoever distances himself from it has sound judgement. How often fantasy makes some things seem secure, and a soul cries out to go in pursuit of them, rush into them – in danger, he talks nonsense and does not plot an escape route from where he has taken himself – just like a lady dependent on a slave loses strength and reason on his departure.

You will see how in Peru they set up and supported the tyrant, only later treacherously to put him down. By design, with a damaged soul, they gave him strength – and then there came to kill him the infidel sword – author of evil, perfidious and malignant towards the king and his friends. These warmongers were stirring up unrest among loyal subjects – deceitful, thinking of climbing more steps for a savage, underhand attack. At the forefront the evil intentions finally emerged, so malicious and outrageous – as you will see if you take a good look at the civil war and the turmoil of this land.

Then all the deceptions were wiped out by the brave Marquis and his prudence; he treated the turncoats severely but acted like someone who well understood grief. In the name of his king, touched by others of that persuasion, he showed clemency, which hitherto had been shrouded in severity – with a general pardon to wipe the slate clean.

Neither the audacious, frightful action, unprecedented in Peru, nor the severe punitive example which had once tamed that proud, emboldened people, were strong enough to muffle the barbarous clamour resounding through those provinces.

By land and sea they had freshly arrived at the scenes of the devastation of our people at the hands of the powerful Araucanians. They rapidly relieved the beleaguered cities and restored overall order.

Jeronimo Alderete, Adelantado, to whom the government was committed, was a man highly esteemed in these provinces – where as a good and energetic soldier he had done great works. *(I am not putting his details in this story, for he is generally well-remembered.)* He had not hitherto known total war, nor such misadventures and contrasts. But as with you, great Philip, when you planted the faith anew in England; there you took on the duties of that land, and executed them with great zeal – but bitter destiny cut short the thread of life.

Her loss was deeply felt – with tears – and the distress grew at seeing the loss of government and a land where each one worked for himself. Discord was already ignited. The lust to rule ran wild. In the final reckoning no body can survive without a head. Those who set out from Chile to ask for assistance, coming exhausted to the Adelantado, and finding their plea opposed to his aims – turned with sad afflicted faces to ask Don Hurtado to see them and provide a speedy remedy.

“Clear-sighted, excellent man; we desperately need you: the power of the barbarians now has Chile in a stranglehold. The best course of action is to send a task force there. In the name of the King we need you to supply this.

“Oh Marquis, we ask for your son, possessed of such grace and virtue, to take the lead – we have confidence in his personality and are sure he could end our predicament. We would be happy for him to take command because we know he is a natural leader. In these parts we have a saying: a sheep is never born from a lion.

“And since there is such a shortage of soldiers – if Don Garcia takes over today, the common people and the gentry will rally round, happy to have such an excellent commander: those who cannot be persuaded by piles of money can be persuaded by love and good company – or shame and fear of annoying you – or seeing that it is in their own interests to please you.”

The Marquis of Canete concurred enthusiastically with this just demand, knowing it to be a matter of necessity. The son, pledging his estate and his relatives, instilled in all the people an urge to go to that land and wield arms in such a war. One man volunteered, then another – and so a large force got moving: first one man volunteered and then another (though a small number lacked confidence and did not respond to the call of duty). The ranks went on swelling until youthful ardour could be seen in tired old men, their weak humour and near-frozen blood reactivated by the happy sound of that day.

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Oh intrepid Araucanian warriors; prepare your weapons and your hearts, and the rare valour of your hands, so feared in the southern zones. What an abundance of fresh youths wave the banners of your doom, thinking of overrunning your land, wreaking havoc, making total war! Not with rusty, mildewed weapons like those left hanging on the walls, not with arms sluggish from sloth and idleness, surrounded by great grief, nor those souls accustomed to relaxing, whom any change disturbs and then numbs, who vanish in the face of an unexpected situation – but with well-tempered, sharpened weapons soaked in the blood of tyrants, robust, brawny arms well exercised in dealing mortal blows – free spirits shorn of fear. The horrendous sound which torments others also awakens, delights and nourishes them.

Because of this, I think that no-one can depose you; but I remain doubtful about what none of you seem to have taken into account: that is the well-known caprices of Fortune. So far, she has always shown you a happy face, but is inconstant, false and variable – firm in evil, fickle in good.

If a Spaniard goes to war, making a proud show of his sword, he wonders if perchance it makes more cuts than yours – if the strength of the weapon can protect him from your power, and the rights of the victor. If he looks back he will see the field littered with your bones.

I do not know; but I had a vision of the people, proud, aroused to warlike fury, and the saddest Spaniard prepared with arms, equipment and good desire. Oh Arauco! If your endeavours are not controlled, and you do not moderate this headstrong action – you, with your courage and presumption – are lost!”

People came from all over to join in this war: from distant Quito, Loja, Piura and Jean, from Trujillo, Guanuco and its environs, many from Guamanga and Arequipa – and from the mountain towns – la Paz, Cuzco and Las Charcas, a horde of chattering, well-armed soldiers.

The earth trembled: the tumultuous roar of the choppy sea reverberated through the air, agitated by fifes, trumpets and drums against the liberated rebel village, already menacing its defenders with heavy artillery, which could be heard in the middle of the countryside. With instruments, harnesses, decorations, the gallant soldiers spurred on; handsome, elegant in their uniforms, they took flashy new equipment with them. Standards and flags fluttered in the wind. Tailors were occupied with cutting and embroidery for the gathering of soldiers. The great hubbub grew; with it the swinging hammers of the blacksmiths made a hard and bitter harmony; the sounds of the obliging armourers deafened the broad horizon; with their hands they saddled the zealous horses, neighing afresh.

And so the embarrassed people went with the new rumblings of war. But, already prepared for the vital task, a leader appeared on the scene, taking many of his command with him. He crossed the high mountains and the depopulated land of Araucana, then flanked its deserted coast, strewn with barbarian skeletons.

Fully prepared and thinking only of time, the main body left the residue of the camp to reach the choppy sea. But on seeing that the sky was clear and the mighty waves were calmed, they left Los Reyes that afternoon with a show of good order and an abundance of boasting.

I too fought alongside those who were wounded and killed in your service – having been in England in a capacity which did not allow me the use of a sword – here came about the damage to your cause, perpetrated by the Araucanians in defiance of the Spanish Crown.

Under your licence, in the company of the Captain and the Adelantado I travelled from London until the day he was buried in Taboga; from there, with toil and struggle, buffeted by fortune and the winds, they reached the rendezvous with its bright, clear people.

I have forgotten who were in the other squadron, as indispensable as ours – temperate, gentle, unassuming friars, providers, clerics leading honest and saintly lives, Franciscans, Dominicans, mercenaries – in order to counter the abuses of war which were more prevalent

here than elsewhere. A bright band of various colours and professions set off from Lima. In the flower-decked port were tables full of food and wine with fragrant savours, where then, for one band and another, reclining on the green grass, we tasted the delicacies.

Happy with replete stomachs, decorated with green branches and ornaments we were led to the harbour where the boats were moored. Seen off by our dear friends to the sound of various high-pitched instruments, we embarked onto the light boats and thrust our oars into the sea.

The boats moved away from the land – leaving sad and envious those who stayed on the sandy beach, without taking their eyes off us. The fast craft reached the ten galleons. As the soldiers jumped into them, the sailors lost no time in trimming the sails to the wind. The ships were adorned with flags, standards and pennants; with the fresh wind blowing in their foremasts, they began quietly to move; there sounded cannons, sacres, falconettes. Embarrassed at the turn of La Isleta, they turned the sail to port from the Auster, heading South-South-West.

Buffeted by the contrary sea, the vessels raised masses of foam; resisting the Auster's mighty power, they approached land. But as they neared the great mountain range of Garbino, they changed tack and found themselves at El Guarco to the North-North-East. Soon we saw El Guarco at the stern, matched by Chinca on the other side. We passed between them on the high sea, reaching fertile Nazca. We resisted the powerful Noto, battling with its fury and mighty waves – the cataclysmic movements of two elements could not stop us.

What happened in Peru is not an extreme case; there are so many changes over three leagues of land; when it is springtime on the plains, the mountains are shrouded in rainy winter. When thick mist covers the plain, the sun shines unclouded on the mountains; for that reason, most floods go down the slopes in springtime.

Of all the winds it is the Auster which clears the overcast skies and drives the clouds to everlasting exile over the sea. The other winds prevail in the Arauca belt; there they are set free, so that in the natural order of things no one can go down to Peru. Then the ships, battling with the Auster, sliced the foaming waves which – impelled by mighty gusts, unleashed their fury, beating the raised bows which were garnished with metal plates. But because the Spaniards had to get to grips with the barbarians, it was essential that they went faster.

They had to join Villagran, who was also speeding up his march by land, crossing the thunderous mountains scraping the clouds. He said that he would win this war, that happiness would show her face to him.

* * *

But now that I've given the broad outline, I want to concentrate on Lautaro. With his warriors he had withdrawn to the site I mentioned. In a short time he had fortified this with a ditch, faggots and logs. Within the compound were his allies, eager for the fame of war. There were

obstacles, and other things useful for withstanding a siege. This fort only had one tower, occupied by alert sentries. There was no trace of anyone else, for this land was almost unpopulated.

That night the barbarian slept with his beautiful, beloved Guacolda. He loved her with a fiery passion; she burned no less for him. The Araucanian was stripped of his cumbersome armour – for that one night, Fate had given him the means – and the desire, for rest. His eyes were closed in a deep sleep, from which he then awoke in sorrow, and beautiful Guacolda, breathless, asked the reason, asked what he was feeling. Lautaro replied “Darling: a moment ago, I dreamed that a proud Spaniard, with a most fearsome face, had confronted me; with a violent hand, he oppressed my strength and heart, but not enough to overcome me: at that point my grief and rage were fused.”

At that she raised her voice, saying “Aye – what you dreamed has also caused me fear – for your end and the beginning of my lament. But I cannot be so wretched, nor can fortune do so much with me that the bitter road of my destiny cannot be cut short by death. I will strive to appear terrifying, happy for the enemy to knock me down, and in my turn to strike down the enemy. If he returns to the attack, he will not be strong enough to take you from me. Even if the blow I expect is unbearable, I will then make good – so that your body will not fall on the cold ground when mine lies dead there.”

With a broad bow, the son of Pillan put his arms around her neck, his tears bathing her white breast, burning with new love. “Don’t assume that it will happen, lady; don’t disturb our happiness with ill omens – in that happy state in which you now see me, put yourself in my arms.

“I feel the truth imaginatively. I do not consider myself dangerous. But the wounds of love are so intense that I suspect the impossible could happen. Lady: if you want me to live, who is strong enough to deal me death? My life is in your hands, not in those of all humanity. Would he who has restored the prestige of the Araucanian people submit his proud neck to the yoke of domesticity? I am the one who has removed Spanish dominion and tyranny from its shoulders. In this land my name alone is enough to make war, without lifting a sword. How much more does it mean that, with you at my side, I have no fear and expect no harm. You cannot give me such a beautiful dream and then deny me the corresponding reality. I am used to casting my fortune over cliffs. Fortune has forever put me in peril – from which I have always emerged with honour.”

Less secure and more tearful, she clung to Lautaro’s neck and pitifully, with pious eyes, beseeched him – mouth to mouth: “If this pure, loving will, which you freely gave when you were more free – to which heaven bears witness – prevails, then you can be my gentle lover. For it judges you, and through that torment which you feel when you leave me, and through faith. If the wind does not take it away, as you tell me with so many tears that at the very least you happily gave me love. If ever you leave me it will be because of a quick call to arms, to be at the wall where you command your men.”

Lautaro replied: “How clearly do I show my esteem for you. But Lautaro has such a low opinion of himself, and thinks so little of the one who has put up such a valiant show for the redemption of the dear people. I know I have good credit with you, but then you cry with fear of death.”

“Yes, for my own,” said Gaucolda, “my power to satisfy your needs is no longer secure – how can I be your strong, protective arm if my misfortune is the greater?”

“But I am suspicious of what comes out; the love I have for you assures me that the sword which makes the separation will go in pursuit of you. Ruthless destiny and hard fate menaced me with a bitter fall; it is inevitable that you should see grievous harm, pain just as you would feel when parted from me. Leave me to weep before my death; I ask little of my life; he who is insensitive to evil can draw little solace from good.”

Through these tears, Lautaro was moved to compassion and to contemplate his love; he could not leave her . . .

But my pen is already disturbed. Finding itself in the middle of a new love affair, it moves confusedly, sluggishly, fearfully; it does not dare to go on.

Canto XIV

(Francisco de Villagran reaches the enemy fort at night without being detected. He makes a lightning attack at dawn and Lautaro dies in the first skirmish. The battle goes on bloodily, swinging between one side and the other.)

What is this rebellious tongue which dares to offend women? We will see that it is the revelation of passion which leads men to such baseness and error. If a barbarian woman of her own free will makes cogent proof of pure love, with reasons and tears exuding from her entrails, what then?

Neither the trust nor the security of his friend gave him any consolation; nor could the strong position and the moated wall allay his suspicions: that the great fear born of adoration would throw him right down to the ground. He only found his only power to resist was in face of the same mortal danger. So the two hearts, fulfilled and united in love, were dissatisfied: further demonstrations of it there nourished the sweet venom. Meanwhile the sentries in the tower rested, tiredly chattering, making their swords into a framework for a tent.

With swift silent footsteps Villagran crossed the rugged mountains. It was a great effort – without which little could have been achieved. Reaching the fort, in a good position, seeing that the sky was still starry, he eagerly waited for the clear new day to emerge from the East. As the night was very dark and he had hoodwinked the sentries by being in a secure, obscured corner, he was not seen or sensed by anyone. The horse did not whinny; no noise from him was part of the venture; all was quiet, all were hidden.

As the shadows and the sky were lightening with imminent dawn, the sentries posted on the wall saluted the new day from afar – then, thinking their patch was secure, left the fort and retired to rest; the soldiers were buried in wine and sweet dreams. It happened to the world at that hour that the dark shadows, unable to bear the clear light of dawn, retired to the West; that was when gloomy Chile improved, turning her back on the red East, admiring the sky crossing the darkness, and fair Apollo Delfico passing her by.

Sensing the opportune time, the Spaniard gradually approached the fort without hindrance from any of the barbarians, whom capricious fortune had turned deaf. Each one slept, unaware of his impending, inexorable death – a sure sign that we had found the place, when we considered ourselves to be the more isolated party.

Seeing that now was the time for the assault, our men waited no longer. They suddenly made an uproar with a proud, horrendous, high-pitched howl. In a rush, as ordered, they began their surprise attack on the fort – shrouded in dreams rather than aware of the present danger. Like criminals who because of their occupation can never find a place of safety – it being a precondition of vice to have some luck and some misfortune, and who do not quickly react when punishment and harm confront them, rush to arms and to their defence, according to

what each one thinks he is worth – so, caught between sleep and wakefulness, the shaken Araucanians rose up – certain of danger and assault, beat on the awnings. Being without armour, they did not show their angry torsos; but swiftly and sure of heart they went to man their wall. Shaking off their heavy, sluggish sleep, and rallying their customary fury, some seized branches, some logs – some brands and some swords. Some, to move more quickly, went unarmed to see the action; if they could not use their fists they would use their teeth.

As far as can be gathered, Lautaro was at that point arguing with gentle Guacolda, reassuring and reprimanding her for the suspicion she had shown. She did not accept the argument, and was more concerned about her own, far greater distress when the hard sound of trumpets and drums disrupted the tender point of their love. *But never did a loaded miser always thinking of his wealth, on hearing the sound of some thief, nor did a mother, at the clear sound of her son in fear of a wild beast – bound up so fast as did Lautaro when he heard the hue and cry.* Having put his cloak on his arm, and unable to put on his armour quickly, the proud barbarian rushed naked to the door – with an unsheathed sword.

Oh perfidious, fickle Fortune! – what a crude point you make in the end – the good, of so many years' duration, is cut down by a single blow. The 400 friendlies who undertook the operation on our side, coming to the aid of the Christians with their painted bows which, propelled by great strength and fast hands, fired a vast number of shots: the son of Pillan emerged from the awning, and an arrow came to find him. Oh bitter fate! Into his left side went the sharp point, and through his right, piercing the bravest, strongest heart that was ever contained in a human breast. He longed to die happily dispatched by a single blow – and usurping his glory, the assailant assumed that the wound was mortal. The sharp arrow wrought havoc, opening up an abundant flow of black blood through the barbarian's copious veins. He sprawled on the ground, eyes blinded, in searing pain. Severed from his mortal body, his soul sank to the infernal abode.

Our men gained the moat and the bulwark; no one could stop them. It was the best part of twenty yards from the fort to the plaza. The barbarians, with passion but devoid of skill – without helmets, shields or armour, started the perilous battle, crude, wild and bloody, at a huge disadvantage. Lautaro's Indian allies, hearing the sudden shout, sallied forth, prepared by fear and shock, but sensing the butchering blows. Those sensitive, disturbed souls listened with attentive ears – from a safe distance, where the din resounded at lower volume. *Like timid deer who sense the sound of the hunter and quietly, their necks high, prick up their ears to locate the source of the noise – and the well-known bleat of the deer which hunters and their hounds latch on to, then take a furious rush to take its life, which escapes from none of this danger,* so this base, vile mob, accustomed to being defeated by fear of such a fate, on a blind path, long disused, broke into flight and abandoned the fort – spilled out, running here and there. So great was their fear of death that even the bravest among them imagined seeing a fierce Spaniard through every leaf.

But those whom fear could never persuade to endanger their side, using bold breasts as shields, kept up the struggle. The bare head did not flinch from the sharp knife, nor did the

sword reject the left hand while being wielded in the right. Young Corpillan, unflinching when his sword fell to the ground, suddenly burned with anger and closed with his adversary. Having recovered his sword he held it in his right hand and thrust it from afar with great disdain and fury, offering his left side to vengeance. There was no weakness in Milleepol as a reverse slit scythed along his side and head, nor when a lance pierced his breast, and foaming blood accompanied its departure, leaving that place hollow. Full of rage and new life, he seized the mace strongly with both hands and wielded it with fury. One could say that whoever approached that proud barbarian was destined for a dire fate; with the prostrate rage of death, the iron-tipped log rose; but life failed at that point, both body and mace falling together.

Although the death in the middle of the road blunted the fury with which he lurched, the valiant Spaniard came to earth with the weight and movement that he bore; but then, getting on his feet, blundering, he turned to his assailant now sprawled on the ground, and saw he was still alive. Throwing himself on top of the body, avid to wreak death, he remained careful and suspicious, and sensed someone apparently clinging on to life – his eyes and face turned cold.

Diego Cano carried the bloodstained sword from this encounter, and joined with Picol, giving the twist of a point into his breast. Claimed by death, the Araucanian fell to earth, his face already defunct, nauseous, churning in the mud until the soul dismissed the body from everything. With two blows Hernando de Alvarado left Talco dead on the ground; he was discovered badly wounded with the intrepid Guacolda by his side. The Spaniard was dumbfounded. But when he recovered, he headed straight for the mighty barbarian and thrust the sword into his breast. Old Villagran, with his bloody sword slashing through the barbarians, killed, wounded, rushed and harassed, twirling round in every direction: a blow aimed at Nico's head left his clouded eyes revolving; he fell dead; another, struck on Polo, cut off his right arm. The steel swords were worn out by hacking naked flesh; wildly impelled, all put their arms and legs into the fray; the second did not refuse to be first – then everyone, following the order, rushed forward like swelling waves and avidly offered themselves to death.

Then the two sides closed so tightly that there was no room to wield swords; scarcely did anyone fall dead before his place was occupied. Some fought standing upright, elevated on the bodies, so pressing for space to swing their swords. The weapons swung with such rage and force that most of the blows were mortal – as for those that weren't, they made such imprints as would last forever; all groaned to relieve their arms, but the effects were uneven; some came across hard steel, others against soft, naked skin. *Just as carrion crows tear up flesh in their talons, just as blacksmiths beat out plates of strong iron on hard anvils*, so was the range of difference between the sounds the various warriors made with their blows – some crushing flesh and bones, some denting tempered armour.

Juan de Villagran stood firm and lashed at Guarcondo in full fury; one thrust of the spear pierced his nipple and his body; the barbarian, already yellow, faint, moved towards the bastion and fell suddenly to the ground, his soul freed by the wound. But his brother Rengo, seeing the discoloured body, calmed his blood and gave him ice to dull the searing pain. The proud, discredited man swore – and, raising his knotty stick on high, reached Juan de Villagran with one jump.

But earlier a speedy arrow from Pon struck the horse in the middle of the forehead; the horse reared up, its neck erect, disobedient to the reins and spurs and, putting its head between its forelegs, impulsively shook its back and legs. Villagran, accepting his bitter fate, left the saddle and stepped down to the ground. Scarcely had he landed when the rapid mace descended with extraordinary force, and a sound like something between a bolt of lightning and an earthquake. The Spaniard remained unconscious and the barbarian struck again, coming down on his head in such a way that his brains, eyes and soul seemed to have departed.

Still not satisfied with such vengeance for the gruesome fall of his brother, renewed in energy and enhanced in spite, he went in the same way for Diego Cano who, chin on chest, dropped the reins from his hands. Without feeling, almost cold, the horse carried him off of its own free will. Raging on in the midst of the melee, he swung his iron mace until, crippled, worn out, he embraced the neck of the horse which stood stunned on its haunches; it was forced to shed its armour and was beaten, dragged down, flattened by the insane fury.

He was covered in blood flowing from more than ten points; but unflinching and bellowing, he struck his blows with even greater fury – rushing hither and thither, denting armour and sallets, knocking down high crests, fracturing skulls and pummelling brains, grinding nerves, flesh and hard bones. With this arose a great noise of swords, spears, yells and shouts. Many people arrived there confused, not knowing the cause. A gallant young man, moved by diabolical fury, wielding a hefty knife, rushed into the midst of the barbarian swordsmen – his face wild, dirty, caked in dust, soaked in blood and sweat – as mighty Mars, when his bellicose fury is ignited, beats the iron shield of Vulcan, brandishing his spear in his right hand. With a swift, skilful stroke he swung round the heavy knife and cut Cron into two parts with one blow, just as if he were a soft stick. Then he sent the skilful Pon to the Inferno, and after that Lauco; finding his victim unprotected by armour, he disfigured and dismembered him.

That warrior Andrea was gigantic in height, girth and muscle. He was of humble stock, originating from Genova al Levante. With strength and agility matching his robust physique, he could wield the big knife, dealing death to all those who approached him. With one blow to Guaticol's waist, he cut he cut him in two on the arena; with another, he sliced off wretched Quilacura's right thigh. Then, with more blows of this kind, the great square was piled up with bodies; his weapon spared no-one. Having seized Colca by the shoulders, he cut off his head with one chop, and then took his sword to Maulen, Lord of Itato, and sliced him

from top to bottom. He wrecked the lances, axes and maces which the barbarians lunged at him – *as a brave bear in flight from its hunters, in rage and grief at its wounds, torn into pieces by the barbed javelins – and, furious, impatient, emboldened, clears the path of injured dogs who, well-punished, make way for it.* In the same way proud Andrea became surrounded by the barbarians. But he moved in such a way as to open up a broad path with his sword. The fury, yelling and fighting grew so much, and more people arrived. Rengo, bloodstained, came too – in time for the battle – and like two mastiffs, surrounded by importunate porcupines who, on seeing them, go between one and the other, taunting them with their prickly backs, so did those two outstanding warriors, wielding their inhuman weapons, come to wound.

But this fight will be described in greater detail in the next canto.

Canto XV

(This 15th and canto (last of Part I) describes the battle in which all the Araucanian warriors were killed, without one of them wanting to surrender. It also tells of the sea voyage from Peru, the great turmoil and tempest which they negotiated between the River Maule and the port of Concepcion.)

What can exist without good love? What verse can have substance without love? Where was there ever a rich vein that love did not engender? Nothing can be called substantial which lacks love for its foundation. Love, with sound judgment, breaks a hard and bitter skin, truly produces talent and taste, and gives everything greater finesse – It led Dante, Ariosto, Petrarch and Ibero to such delicacy; the richest, most copious language is insipid if it does not suffused with love.

Then I, without love, equipped with an uneducated talent and a rude style – how could I have the audacity to put myself to the raw edge? But my zeal and good intent are what sustain my thread, which had been cut by fear, thinking to remedy this importunity.

Considering it to be a massive and laborious piece of writing, I want to leave it now, to get closer to the truth and concentrate on the main priority. There is no style so sweet and delicate, nor pen so fine and sonorous that it is not ravaged in a light discourse, nor taste which is not pestered by some dish. If it was given to my discretion to go into the country and pick flowers, perhaps my tired palate would revive the well-known variety of scents. Then, as others have done, I can interweave a thousand fables and amours, but as I am already so deeply involved in what I have promised I must go on with it.

* * *

I will proceed to the Lombard and the Araucanian, who were locked in hand-to-hand combat, long sword and mace raised. The Italian was covered in chain mail, the Indian wore no armour and so – being more agile, struck the first blow. Seeing the ferocity with which it swung down on him, the muscular Italian returned the blow. In mid-action the strong shield broke, and he was stunned – so that, clenching his teeth, he could see the most distant stars in the sky on the ground. The Lombard discharged the weapon, which he held above the valiant barbarian, thinking that two cuts would finish him; such was the reasoning of that gallant soul. But Rengo (who did not lose the plot), like a nimble light grey ounce, suddenly jogged his right hand, so that the blade struck down in vain. Through all this the nimble barbarian kept hold of the mighty mace, in a way which made certain that he was undone, not by Andrea, but by a heavy rock. The fight ran equally between them, though I feared for Rengo – that at the first time the knife fell, the combat would end with his death.

With consummate aplomb and no weapons – armed only with his will-power, he entered, left and returned like the wind. But skill and agility were supreme – he always struck his blow,

and at that moment he found himself so cornered – that, although the knife was only a few feet away from him, he could not wound him. The Italian, now aroused to fury at a naked, unarmed Araucanian matching him, struck 1,000 vain blows. Joining his right hand to his left and flexing his sword, he made a heavy attack on the barbarian, his arms aloft, thinking of cutting him in two. With skilful verve Rengo swung down the mace, hoping for a decisive blow. But the body swung aside as the sword struck down that the weapon struck a void. And the great sword could not sustain its force, staying there with only half a shield. Then rose the mace; the fleet barbarian closed in and they got to grips, body to body, so that the marks of the chain mail were imprinted on their breasts; the Lombard was not embarrassed by the attack, but thinking he had the advantage, seized his adversary with strong arms, to lift him off the ground.

Our man wanted to do to the Araucanian what Alides did to Anteo, but fortune did not smile on his desire and the attempt failed. The energetic Rengo made a detour some distance across the plain, stumbling over dead bodies, more fury boiling up inside him. Andrea burned with rage and exasperation at feeling himself humiliated by such a man. He had his feet firmly on the ground, making an effort to retrieve his armour; in this way reached Rengo, whom he had lifted from the ground, who was of great strength and proved himself up to handling the new task. Among many brave young men, holding trials of strength, I saw one holding a rope between his teeth, divided into four; his adversaries, at the same time, in different places, tugged to dislodge the thread from his teeth, and then to take it in hand as a prize.

With the greatest of ease they took the biggest boot or barrel that they could find, with a capacity of 20 litres, full of water and lifted it a foot or so off the ground; they held it up without turning, serene. It quenched their thirst for a long time – then they lowered it to the ground as if it were a light pitcher. It happened on other occasions that they went boating on the rivers which abound in this land. They struggled strenuously against the current, trying to negotiate the craggy rocks which trap the boat, as the movement of the oars is not strong enough to keep the oars free. Then, in his chain mail, he threw himself into the water. With a rope in his mouth, turning his breast to the furious torrent, flexing his feet and strong arms – he negotiated a channel, towing the boat, resisting the impetus of the water; rescued it – taking it from the narrows to the edge, and doing a thousand other things I shall not describe here.

Here he surpassed Rengo in what was no mean trial of strength. But Rengo, seething with anger on seeing that he had lifted him up without keeping hold, got up on his feet and turned on him, the thirst for vengeance giving him renewed strength. In the end, the two released each other and took up weapons again. They recommenced the wild struggle, as if they had been relaxing all day – now beneath, now above: without fear, each one took on the other. Rengo, who was without armour, handled himself with such skill and manic energy that he sustained this fight solidly, not losing an inch of ground. Swiftly, he struck again at the Christian's side, which hurt his whole body, after which he recovered his strength. The other redoubled his effort. In my reckoning their strength grew fourfold, but at the fourth blow,

which came down most heavily, the astute barbarian dodged it and wounded him with his sword.

The sword pierced his arm, opening up a wound in his side. But such was his luck – and destiny – that the blow was not fatal. Rengo became suffused with pure venom, and, with courage far removed from fear, attacked his proud enemy again, swinging his mace. Andrea raised his shield to parry the blow, but he could not resist altogether, although he had dodged it. He was buffeted on the head, and his morion dented, as if it were made of tin and not strong, tempered steel. The Italian reeled 2 or 3 paces from that blow. Wobbling, he lost his memory and his senses; he teetered towards a fall, blood pouring from both of his ears in a great flood, as when some fountain bursts from its abundance. He could only remain standing with difficulty.

But rallying, seeing himself bloodstained, and in such dire straits, more furious than ever – ablaze at being humiliated by a barbarian, synchronised his arm with his right foot, to make more strength and swing down the heavy sword, with a swish echoing through the mountains of sound. Rengo, who saw the big sword coming down, sensing its furious impetus, bravely wielded his mace as a barrier, shielding himself beneath it. But in spite of being reinforced with bars of steel, the mace was not a strong enough defence. A big chunk of it broke off and fell to the ground; the furious sword came down on his head.

The blow was lethal; it released a red fountain. Rengo stumbled – stunned and almost blind from bloodshed. Andrea was not idle; seeing there was no respite, he swung his great sword again, with all the energy he could muster. The Italian wounded the tottering Rengo in the middle of his exposed brow, and cut him open from top to bottom. He did not twist the sword to relieve his hand. The blow was even; the Araucanian fell sprawled on the ground, as if dead. The sword, metal-fatigued by the blow, broke into four pieces.

Crino, who turned his face at the great sound of the powerful strike, and of the fall, seeing valiant Rengo thus laid out, thought that he had passed on. Moved by friendship and a sense of loyalty, he wielded the deadly sword of his own master – which Tucapel had acquired at Penco in vengeance for the barbarian. He struck a blow at Andrea. This penetrated his quilted jerkin but did not stop there; its thrust broke the chain mail and penetrated to the bone. He turned with a two-handed sword-stroke. Andrea, well hidden, seeing the sword coming, was so quick with his resistance that Crino had no time to wound him. Without giving him any more space in which to grapple, and satisfied with the wounds, he stood up high, and spread out the swords with a great fall. To be a guide and to end that conflict, the sword left him; then life followed suit, putting himself in the part where proud Mars proved more sanguinary. The path through the mountains is very narrow; woe to those who have to take it – one part across, another on the right, another – again, on the turn, yet more – whom it tends, but does not satisfy – causing bruises, fractures and dislocations. Innumerable arms and heads lay out in the open.

In fury the good Lasarte pitched himself into the midst of the melee. He stabbed Talcuen in

the chest and turned furiously on Titaguan, splitting open his un-helmeted head. But the raging barbarian rallied; before his soul departed, he gave Lasarte a cut which bled profusely. Pacheco cut Norpa's side open, and then struck down Longoval – dead. Then, on that side, Juan Gomez, covered in fresh barbarian blood, had knocked down Colpa and slashed open the belly of the unarmed Galvo; that mortal barbarian, his colour turned, heaved his last sigh and gave up his soul. Gabriel de Villagran was not idle – he had despatched Cinga and Pillolco and spiritedly returned to the midst of the barbarian weapons. The resonance of the weapons, the various calls and the general hubbub made the confused books look at the spectacle.

The rage and fury blazed; the two sides crammed together – nobody claiming more space than sufficed for him to die in his footsteps. Some slashed, some pierced, some broke, some bruised. They fought on with desperate courage, pressing forward to engage the living without the dead falling down in their path.

I cannot depict the pride, the fury, the disdain, the unremitting hardness of the blows in their entirety – my pen cannot move at such lightning speed. Nobody there had any fear of death. But if they turned their faces, they showed more sadness, because they well knew that they would remain defeated if they lived.

Although they had lost all hope of victory and no longer had the will to live, they deferred the point of death in order to wreak more vengeance through their fall; because of that, they would not retreat one step, nor turn their breasts from the lance – if doing so meant that they stopped fighting the enemy. Here 4, there 6, on all sides. Ceaselessly they fell dead on the ground, some with blood draining from 1,000 wounds, some with their chests ripped open, others again with hearts exposed through their slashed sides – hearts still beating, proclaiming their great courage.

Some attacked the hated enemy, stumbling on their own intestines. Others, panting from 20 wounds, lay bare their entrails. All saw themselves in despair of their lives – because the door was suddenly shut on them; it finally ceased for everyone. They ran out of strength, life, blood and breath. After that, not an 8th part of the barbarians who fell without surrender was left standing. Villagran, who observed the scene from some distance, seeing the survivors so badly wounded, sent two Indians to say that they should hand themselves over as prisoners, submitting to the yoke of obedience, and that he would treat them with clemency.

All the Spaniards recovered their swords and peace in a moment, while the two messengers laid out the terms and conditions. But the Araucanians, when they heard that communication, the landslide, reacted so strongly that they could not verbally reply to the proposal: with their eyes turned to heaven, they cried “Let us die!” They said nothing else; they wanted to die – and so named death, yelling “Away with the life of a coward!” That is the reply they shouted; and to bring the bloody war to an end, they rallied with spirit and courage, drawing new strength from their weakness. Swords clashed again. Some fought on their knees, unable to stand because their crippled legs failed them, and so wielded their swords as they writhed on

the ground. To do as much damage as they could, they turned to the feet opposite them. Seeing living bodies dismembered, struggling furiously with death, wallowing in mud and gore, crazedly crushing against each other, just as one can see the fish when a lake is drained – writhing between the two elements and dying in their grip.

If crude Sila or bloody Nero had witnessed this inundation, I am sure that even they would be satiated, drenched in more human blood than was shed in the field of Marcio Sila and the forum of the bestial Nero in Rome. They treated alike all the wounded who did not want to surrender; those already at death's door were brutally despatched. The weary Spaniards, badly wounded, left the circled plaza full of weapons and barbarian bodies, painfully stumbling over them. No barbarian remained standing in the fort; none had an arm with which to wield a sword. Only Mallen, in the jaws of death, had the will to live. He had been struck down by terror and base destiny. Having been badly wounded in the left arm from a sword stroke, he had hidden behind a thick wall.

Not sensing the noise that was audible before, resounding through the plain which, as I said, death had silenced with an angry hand. He left the wall to go in search of some Araucanian who would rescue him, and bandage the sensitive wound. But when he saw the square as it was – the charnel-house of his friends, disfigured by death, he felt envy for those he knew. With anger and shame, he put the sword to his heart, and said: “How can it be – that I remain, a solitary witness to the courage and death of so many friends? This cowardly heart is surely unworthy of any brave sword thrust! It was from choice, and not through destiny that I missed such a golden opportunity.

“Oh weak one! You took me away from the path to eternal life, and I have come to a disgraceful death, shrunk in stature, because of what my cunning helped me to avoid. If my blood were allowed to mingle with the blood of the state – seeing my body thrown among them, though attacked by a weak arm, perhaps I will be counted among those who defended their country. But woe is me, whose weak hand will be known forever from its wound! What demonstrations will suffice? What amends can I make for this offence to my honour, country? I stained the great reputations of so many. Then one could say that among them were those who, through fear, despicably, hardly saw the face of the enemy. Why do I give strength to fear, expanding my day with a mass of excuses? Repentance: what is the point of that when repentance is useless?”

Thus he spoke, and, without hesitation, gave his neck to the deadly sword, running its sharp edge along – in an instant cutting the thread of life. The fury of raging Mars ceased, and the swords relaxed a little . . .

Meanwhile let us turn to the route of the leaking ships, struggling against the mighty, obstinate Noto, against the high waves of Neptune breaking over them, holding their direction against wind and water. They navigated between the uninhabited islands of Sangallan, and the other, unexplored ones to the right of Poniente. They passed Chaule to the West to reach Arica, and then – with difficulty, Copiapo, first valley in Chile proper.

There the winds blew freely, issuing forth from their concave caverns; furious, indomitable, violent they swept over that broad sea, breaking out of the prison and commands of King Aeolus, fearing that the world would wreck them, imprison them, throwing up a great mountain range over them. His fury was not appeased by this; they were urged to come into his caverns. Through the deafening noise of the storm, they sought the exit from those empty, concave enclosures. The firm land was removed from under their feet. There was trembling, there were earthquakes everywhere, shaking down villages, mountains, men, livestock, houses and cabins . . .

As the waters mingled there the days got longer. This is the reverse of what happens in Europe, because it coincides with the sun leaving the Equinox and approaching Capricorn. There the ships ran into difficulties, battling against the sea and the Auster, far from the help of Boreas; and they reached the port of Coquimbico. Scarcely had we arrived at the desired harbour, disembarked and put their feet on firm ground, than we forgot the abundant sea, the danger and pain of such a long journey. We went on to the new city of La Serena, which is two leagues from the port. Riding fresh, garnished horses, we arrived at the expected time.

There they gave us all a great welcome and hospitality, honouring with gracious compliments the help we were bringing and the great trek we had undertaken. Well refreshed, the crew returned to the point where the armada had gathered, so exhausted by their long journey. They looked after the men and horses who, wracked with hunger and toil, had struggled through the rough, depopulated terrain. But our fortune changed at this point. Soon after reaching the city, we relaxed for a month with great self-indulgence, until the horses had recovered.

At the end of this, without expecting the fleet, recovered from the bitter journey, we accepted the failure of our quest. Turning to the right from the nearby sea, we passed the fertile Ligua, and at Quillota and proceeded along a path which led to Mapocho, where the fugitive remnants of Penco's men were waiting for us. The sun rose in Gemini, giving the mortals a new day. The solstice, at its zenith, scorched the northern regions where the shade is greater at midday, to illuminate the Southern parts – and the winds blew more freely, sighed more deeply at the southern hinge.

Without fear of the angry winds then unleashed on these parts, showing their violence in full – we re-embarked. With happy boasting, we weighed the iron anchors and trimmed the sails for the North-West. The sea was calm, the weather good, the wind fresh and favourable, the sky peaceful – with every sign of staying so. It was like that for six days, but on the seventh, Fortune (which is never consistently good) clouded the sky, changed the win and stirred the sea from its depths. Here raging Borio took a hand, with heavy gusts, and suddenly, on the calm, flat sea there arose great mountains and hills. The Spaniards, seeing the insane fury of wind and water, afflicted, longed for the land – though there would be war at landfall.

I can only describe my ship, the flagship of the fleet which drifted, leaking, wrenched by the

bitter storm. But who would be in such a mess if it was not somebody's fault? In the general mayhem I could not pinpoint anyone. The wind assailed the ship with such fury, and the turmoil was so strong and swift that it seized the mainsail, and the mast was on the point of snapping. But seeing the weather was so tempestuous, the pilot jumped up, crying loudly "Tie up the fragments! Quickly! Let the winds fill the sail!" The power of the sea, the strong wind, the racket, the promises, the fall of night at a moment of thick, gloomy black clouds, the countless thunderclaps and flashes of lightning, the voices of the pilots and the prayers made a sound of such sad harmony that the whole world seemed to be perishing.

"Calm down!" cried the sailors. "Calm down; raise the foremast!" This galvanised the passengers. A great number of them tackled the fragment, whilst others rushed to the sheet, to hold it down, but the wind was so ferocious that no-one could keep it under control. The sky opened, the transformed sea roared, the emboldened wind whistled. At this, a mountain of water, rising high with a mighty roar, thrust the galleon onto its side, leaving it submerged for a long time; everyone was in terror of drowning.

But God desires that of fate – *as the great whale brandishing its blunt muzzle, parries the conquering power of the waves, reveals and arches its broad back, swirling the waters in broad circles* – so the ship emerged from under the sea, turning a great river at each rotation. Tempestuous Boreas further swelled the sea, raising it to the heavens; although it was a patched-up job, the mast stood firm, towering over the prow. The men, with great effort and shouting, struggled to drop the sail, which the mast still held in the shape of an arc, and so shipwreck was avoided.

Aeolus, perhaps grieving for the afflicted Spanish people, went to meet Boreas – wanting to shake hands with him, not telling Zephyrus who was nearby, with red chains on his door. Seeing the sea was open, He went roaring to it. With a violent blow, snatching many clouds on the way, he threw himself on the rising sea, closing the night with a black whirlwind, and mending the violent waves which were suddenly following the path of furious Cierzo, enraged them and charged the tossing sea.

The storm and the voyage went on; then a hailstorm battered the ship on one side. So it hung, and the high masts dropped into the sea. The fury was so fast that the people could not calm down. When the pilots saw the coast and the angry winds, they placed their hopes with the Fates. The ship, checked by sea and wind, moved with its keel exposed – now lifted above mountains of water, now completely submerged. Then there came a gust of wind which opened up a corridor through the surging waters; this ripped a sail from the foremast, and the bulwark was almost broken.

A cry arose among the people: thinking all was lost, they looked at the pilot who, in panic, did not know what orders to give. Some said "Abandon ship!" others "Wait! Turn the rudder right round!" in panic they looked for the trapdoor, a board or a plank, to take the ultimate measure. Fear grew; clamour proliferated. One said "Into the sea!" another "We'll make it to the shore." "Calm down", said someone else, who which came the reply: "Get to the luffing;

if we let up, we are lost. Let's get to the toolboxes! Pull down the masts and the damaged fittings!" Dumbfounded, everyone milled round in a confused mass – stirred by turbulent Zephyrus, the rigging and fittings creaked; the swollen waves roared again, breaking on the nearby rocks which penetrated the dark shadows and the obstinacy of intricate clouds. The rocks, battered by the waves, cast their foam to the sky.

The wind crossed here, and the nearby coast – full of reefs where, with the great ebb tide, the water flowed – mixed with sand. The sail was broken, the damage extensive. *The foremast was loose, the masts without ropes and their slender hopes dashed, stifled by the furious wind.*

Part II

Canto XVI

(This Canto shows the end of the torment. It describes the entry into the port of Concepción and the Isle of Talcahuano. The General Council of the Indies meets in the Valley of Ongolman. It outlines the differences between Peteguelen and Tucapel, and the agreement they finally reached.)

My weary croak sounds forth – penetrating the hubbub, drowning the wretched lament with an overwhelming voice which disrupts the movement of the earth and heavens. Bold and clear it trumpets the famous story, lending fury to my tired breath, as the weapons and fury of renewed war suffused the land.

Give me your blessing Lord; I believe it is you who could help me most in these dire straits. With your grace and favour there to protect me, I do not see myself as being in mortal danger, See where good desire has placed me and how my voice is honoured by your lending it an ear. Then the mighty sea paid heed to you and abated its surging fury. By making it turn its back on your ship, you helped it through this tight spot. Without explicitly stating it, I understand that all is subjected to your will, even the proud ocean, flouting the bitter decrees of the Fates, uprooting the rocks from the sea-bed and mixing the high waves with the sky. I hope my damaged boat will reach its desired harbour in spite of the Fates, the obstinacy of the truculent sea and the high winds which have threatened life and put back the time of arrival – when old adversity was overcome through your intervention.

The four mighty elements conspired against the weak ship. They overstepped their own boundaries, reeled into disorder; indomitable, moved and muddled in their ancient discord and total force, like the prime confusion of chaos.

Assailed by so many conflicting forces, the broken ship almost sank beneath the mighty surge, but was swept along by the furious wind and tides. Whipped by the violent breakers, it hit the rocks. Faced by the anguish of death, the voices and tears grew; borne by the bitter wind they battered the distant, hollow rocks: pilots, sailors and passengers clamoured, orderless. Some cried “keep going!”, others “stop!”. Those struggling to reach the mainsail just found its shreds. One passed by another, petrified by fear. Some made open confessions and begged God’s forgiveness for their sins. Some have expressly voted, some made promises, some cried for their absent mothers – sheer terror augmenting their cries, laments and prayers.

On the other side, the stern sky seemed to come down to earth, and the swollen sea proudly to reach the heavens. What does this mean, mighty Eternal Father? Is it so imperative to flood

and drown a ship – that the sea, wind and sky should concentrate their strength on the task? *The boat of Amiclas had never been embroiled in such a struggle with the wind and sea as did our boat, equipped with fragile timbers, carrying the weight of the world. Nor did the ship of Ulysses, nor the armada which escaped from Troy on that final day – see the wind intensified to such fury, nor the sea so aroused to turbulence.* The strongest minds and spirits gave themselves over to pestiferous fear; the frightful image of death was imprinted on each one's face; all were resigned to their destiny, with no hope of a remedy. They gave themselves over to the Fates, foolishly running hither and thither. An indefatigable wave, roaring, wrapped up in a vortex of wind, broke a great cable from the hull, covering the galleon that had already overturned. But then something strange happened; the ratchet of the loose foremast was locked, with great swaying, into the passage, to become an extra tooth of the anchor which had been dropped. And as that mask was weakly fitted, it was seized and ripped off by the wind, buffeted back and forth, shivered and smashed. But God, who does not forget his creatures (though sometimes his favours are tardy) happily caused the bowsprit to clutch a curved prong of the anchor.

The sail was fixed; in a moment it steered the galleon in the right direction, in spite of the sea and the powerful wind, jumping to luffing the rudder left top lightness. Our people were suddenly happy that the unseen, timorous breast could bitterly suffer to a point where the extremes of pain and pleasure are blended as one. Then sudden happiness chased suspicious fear away, suffused with light and heat the frozen blood which had already abandoned their limbs. The vigorous and contrite company, facing the sky, bathed in tears, gave thanks for God's blessing with a devout prayer. We knew we had reached our desired destination of Arauca. Seeing the mouth of Penco, we reached the harbour to our stern. In this we were protected by an island which made a break against the fury of the norther, and the buffetings of the sea which kept hammering at us on that side – the oblong, curved point of a headland made a breast, made everything quiet and peaceful, gave the weary ship a safe haven.

But the raging swollen sea and the untamed wind – roaring again at full volume, attacked the ship: in vain. Through that bitter struggle the fortune of Philip prevailed; the galleon towered over the high, foaming waves, flooding the eager sky. Through the thick, dark mist being swept aside by the furious wind, we discovered Herradura to the east, while to the south there rose the isle of Talca.

The wrecked, rudderless ship surged onto the high edge of a rock, assured by a thick rope and a strong anchor which held the bottom with its firm tooth. Scarcely had the high sail dropped down when the bustling tumult of war spread to us, battering our ears, crushing our souls and nerves.

The islet is inhabited by a people brave, sturdy and warlike, and seeing that Fortune had driven a solitary ship their way, crying "War! War!", proudly took up arms. With loud cries they rushed to the harbour and assembled in the fold of a recess, drawn up as a fully-formed squadron. Our men – ready to face any danger or assault, took up arms: their past travails and torments made any other peril or mighty ordeal feel like nothing. Having caught our breath,

with new life, we ran to the ship – as if, far from land, it had run onto a sandbank. On both sides, the two big boats were lowered from the galleon, and as many men who could be crammed together there rushed in.

This is no fanciful poetic adornment, but an accurate account of the events: now there was a marvellous occurrence – strange omen and sad portent, now the violence of a rigorous star, now a rare and furious movement on earth, suspended in chaos – remote from any resolution or agreement.

When the wind calmed down and the Spaniards set foot on land, a ray of sunlight struck, turning that cloudy veil into a vivid flame – in the form of a running lizard. One could see a comet split in the sky; the sea roared and the resentful earth groaned as if oppressed by a great weight. Suddenly an icy fear stemmed the force of the disturbed elements, subdued by a sinister prophesy of their ruin, and bad things for the future, the coming of that rare moment and the marvellous signals which announced their destruction and loss and threatened perpetual oppression.

Fearful of that, they dared not wait: letting go of their arms already defeated, they broke from the tight squadron to save their sad lives and finally abandoned their native home. With women, children and provisions, via secret paths and tracks, they escaped on rafts and logs. Far away our men, without ceasing to run, discovered deserted dwellings everywhere, well stocked with provisions; roads, paths and parades maintained with great diligence – and looked for the absent natives in caverns and dense thickets. There, within a short time, some poor Indians were discovered in hiding, others held up in villages; they were not intimidated, but rather assured of good treatment – given music, clothes and words of love, which quietened them down and sent them to their homes in peace.

They were given to understand that our main motive for the expedition was religion: the salvation of the rebelled baptized people who, in contempt of the Holy Sacrament, had perfidiously broken its received law and sworn faith, illicitly taking up arms. But if they were willing to submit to Christian law, which they had hitherto followed, and restore their broken allegiance to Emperor Charles V, to be converted in all the main areas for his profit and comfort.

Then we sought out military supplies and accommodation in the appropriate places, so that no one could obstruct us or defend themselves against us. We all simultaneously, diligently, collected tents, canvas and food; we lit fires and in well-worn vessels prepared our damp, stale wheat. A frightful black night, covering land and sea, flashed down from the sky, wrapping the world in its shadowy veil; there was no tent or store that the wind did not batter to the ground, seeming with new movement to impose its will on the island – until the late and desired day dispersed the clouds and left the sky clear, restoring to brightness the dark sky and the damp land. Then the hard-worked company, knowing the good weather was unstable, made thorough preparations for the violent winter. Some quickly took the straw from the absent Indians' huts, others went loaded with boards and branches and to make new

lodges. On top of thick tree trunks formed into foundations, we took a large amount of material and rapidly built a village. Just as birds, impelled by the same necessity weave and build their nest with straw, feathers and twigs, coming and going, their beaks strained by their burdens, so in these barren places each one makes his lodgings. Thus, sir, we were lodged in the damp, marshy land; through skill and diligence we protected ourselves against the savage winter, and prepared the necessary armaments – letting off our heavy artillery, whose frightful noise made the land and sea tremble.

Among the remote barbarian nations there is great uproar and novelty: on land, vicunas, lions and tigers run fearfully here and there. In the sea, dolphins, Nereids and Tritons hide in its deep caverns, halting the confused currents of the rapid rivers and springs.

There was felt an explosion in the land, and some were astonished that the nape of the neck, never oppressed, bent over the rigid breasts. And so, already warned of their arrival, they sounded their warlike instruments; all the river banks were bright with their flags and banners.

Gathered in the valley of Ongolmo, there were 16 Araucanian chieftains, and some distinguished captains of the area – all agreed that they should get to grips with our men. The chiefs held a council to determine the time, place and equipment. Rengo, accepted by the Council of War as a brave man, was also with them. By all accounts, he was somewhat stunned by his experience of all the fatalities in Mataquito. But then he pulled himself together, and finally, happily, escaped. Although he had lost blood, his strength held out against the raging fury of death. Caupolicán, in their midst, turned his eyes on them all; in silence and with ready hearts, they listened to his arguments. With his breast turned, and with a serene gesture, raising his voice in grave tones, he broke the mute silence and thus spoke out his intent and fury:

“Brave men: that happy promised time has come (we shall see signs and signals of it) – when we shall make ourselves immortal, we whom benign fortune has brought from the remotest eastern parts, so many people assembled in one company in order to take vengeance on our oppressors. As a reward for your blood and your lives, your swords will be made eternal, and all our laws, now suppressed, will be restored to their free strength which, having come from distant kingdoms, must be sacred and inviolable, there being as many living under them, in equality, as are living under the stars. And since with such mad thoughts these people have shamelessly come to our land, to your defended seat with their banners flying, it is fitting that their arrogant transgression should be punished by a new example, giving a thread of hope before our strength is sapped by delay. So I am resolved (and yes, gentlemen, you seem so too) that we should make a pre-emptive strike against them with the best that we have. Never think that there is any other way than that which opens up with strength and courage – never doubt that weapons brandished in hands prove who is the just party, and who the tyrant.”

With this speech ending the conference, the good Peteguelen, grave veteran, stated his case, saying: “Oh captains! I will not flinch from being the first to shed my blood: although I may seem frozen by age, my heart beats at full power in my breast. But only one thing holds me back, making me doubt the outcome: from reliable information, we know that they have many men, so it is clear that any move on our part will meet with stiff resistance. If one does not take full account of the circumstances, then tragedies can happen. Since the site where they are pitched is essentially strong and secluded, surrounded by the sea and high crags, free and well-defended on both sides, it will be more appropriate and profitable to lend an ear to their arguments – rather than contradicting or making denials, as simply listening involves no obligation).

“This will do no harm; in the process, we can suss these people out, secretly prepare everything necessary and convenient – in these difficult conditions make the means to be disruptive, attack and break the flat passages, get all hands pulsing . . .”

He could say no more. Burning with rage, Tucapel assailed him in a furious voice: “Whoever spends so much time looking will never get to grips with our honourable day. If all the state holds back because things seem perilous, I will take up arms on my own, embrace the cause and the burden.

“Perhaps you lack confidence in your strength so well-tryed. If so, then brandish your lances and swords; tell yourselves that you have to change – that our victories have been debased, our honour and credit outraged by this base division. Then understand that while I have strength in my arms and a voice in the Senate, tell Peteguelen what I want – that he should be sentenced to combat. Add that whoever claims to take another path will first have to open it up through my body! And it is this iron mace that gives the reasons, not speeches. Those who boast of having spoken well, and have the guts to go to the battlefield, will test more clearly what I can do. But if you want to join together in describing fear as prudence, in order not to risk your lives, you can all talk as you make your departure.”

Peteguelen replied “Old man, since no-one accepts your argument, I alone will battle with you to castigate your mad audacity. You can be armoured in leather or chain mail, equipped with lance, sword or mace, as you choose. I will now show you that I have stronger hands than reasons.”

Who could ever paint that cold face which Tucapel raised to the sky? Throwing an incandescent light through his eyes, not deigning to look at the ground, at last he said “in its final essence, such an arrogant thought is worthy of Tucapel’s fury; but for my honour and your estate, I want to join you.”

The old man replied: “I have never, at any time, used the assistance of alien forces. Neither are my veins empty of blood, nor does my arm feel so weakened that I would not seize you

with my bare hands.” But Rengo, his nephew, rose and, turning, said “I take that challenge, if you wish, on myself.”

“I would be happy to take you on” cried Tucapel, “and ten more with you.” But Orompello, jumping from his seat, said “You must do it with me, Rengo. “You too must make amends for your transgression” replied proud Rengo, “as rapidly as you made your threats.”

Tucapel told him, “I am the first to condemn you for angering Orompello in any way. To put that right you will be my prisoner. Away! Away! I'll set you apart. I do not want any delay; we have the arms, the time and the will to realise our destiny.” Rengo and Peteguelen answered him, both with weapons and with reasons. In their midst there were not many chieftains, nobles or elders asking to suspend and defer those threats and questions, until Fortune confirmed that there would be a favourable end to that day.

Caupolicán was already impatient to see that Tucapel, every day, in war, in peace, using insolent terms, spurred them on without reason or care. But he had to proceed gingerly as time and reason required it; with sternness, combined with a gentle request, he damped the fury and put out the fire, proposing that when the war was over, the old man and Tucapel should enter single combat, after which Tucapel and Rengo should also enter an armed contest.

When the noise had subsided Colocolo spoke: “Glorious Chieftains: if we can say that our long years of experience will assure future success it must be acknowledged that we, on our own, have wasted our strength, so that the knife of empowered tyranny has been raised to our throats. I see the unsettled sky as a that Fortune is hesitating; to me it is a clear signal of your impending fall, When a great building is on the tilt it is not far from falling to the ground; a structure built on a weak foundation will come to the same grief. And so, if I am not mistaken, according to the circumstances, I see our makeshift buildings crashing to the ground, and the practice of war degraded to base, servile chores, finally breaking your spirit, which is founded on vain, shallow pride.

“We saw Lautaro die, and our three banners lost with great dishonour, our squadrons – red with blood, laid out exposed to the winds, food for the wild beasts – forces and opinions divided, the land full of foreigners and our weapons furiously wielded against ourselves. I am disgusted that our country dies through blind stupidity, our liberty perishes as our arms and strength favour the real enemy: ailments are incurable, mortal when one takes no medicine for them. Bestial and hateful is the passion which will not heed wholesome counsel. Why do we contrive, with such cruelty, to dissipate our strength, and, embroiled in petty squabbles, give force and rights to the enemy band? Why do we, with such fury, tear this invincible union to shreds, condemning our proven cause and just arms, justifying all the injustices? What rage, what foolish rancour have you engendered against your own people, that you wish the state of Arauca to be destroyed by its own hands, drowned in its own virtue and strength, want it to submit with infamy to foreign rule, foreign laws – to an eternal yoke of dire servitude? Turn to your own, as you go recklessly careering to the cliff edge, restrain this

furious surge that can wreak such havoc. Will you not heed sound advice? Will you simply suffer the enemy who wants so brutally to conquer you? There is a lack of spirit, a veiled weakness. This furthers the enemy's cause, by turning our own swords against ourselves, notwithstanding the hard blows of irate fortune which any strong heart, not wanting to drop down dead, will resist.

“So much energy is trapped inside you; I condemn this. Go forth: let not only this land, but the whole universe, resound with your heroic deeds, stand together for the common good. Do not break your bonding through stupidity, as we are all members of one body. If any credit and respect are due to weary old age and long days, look at these old white hairs, and my zeal, my sense of the public good: put away your quarrels once and for all; then the Spanish fury will abate and our common cause prevail. I hope I can leave you to use your initiative and take the right path. I do not wish to give you any more arguments, as I am sure that you have your heads and hearts screwed together. Then venture forth; the only thing which holds us back is the lack of equipment which I see here. On all sides, this arm of the sea divides us, impedes our path. Then the enemy holds back from discussing the terms of a peace treaty: Although we would never think of accepting it, it would do us no harm to listen to it. In this way we can get an idea of their intentions and plans. If these prove unjust, we can completely disrupt them; in this way we will have time to prepare our armoury – in order to make what is right speak with actions. But one must be aware, men, that, to guide us well, our apparent intentions are always directed towards peace – giving the impression of having weak heads, our strength and hopes broken, recognising that this land of rich gold mines is the bait on which these people bite. With this end in view, we can perhaps make a strongpoint of the island and lull them into a false sense of security with a feigned peace – skilfully luring them to their deaths, and without a sign of battle, open up the path in such a way as to gain vengeance – sure of a secure peace and free entry.”

There the wise old man ended his speech. Then differing views were expressed. Some said that the danger was too slight to justify such fear and inconvenience. But Puren, Lincoya, Talcaguano, Lemolemo and Elicura moved closer to the old man's views, away from the others. Sent from there with diligence, was generous Millalauco, a man of great articulation and experience – cautious, wise, cunning and astute, who, with a deceptive front and the appearance of being utterly honest and honourable, infiltrated our intent and design, noting the site, personnel and numbers. He, instructed by the chiefs (in the spirit of the times) as was most convenient, was put into a big barge, and without further ado went on his way. Propelled by swift oars he and his men reached our settlement without hindrance. Three of our ships had also arrived with the fresh wind, full of weapons, men and provisions – to reinforce our camp with military ware. Stopping for a while, confused, Millalauco took note of these.

Without letting on, without dissimulation, he switched to warlike mode, ranging his judicious eyes over the weapons. He assessed the men's morale, and listened to the discussions between them. They obstructed the desired end. The sea was covered in shipping, the land full of armed men and munitions. Having reached the pavilion of Don Garcia, finding me and

the others present there, he greeted us in his way. *But mine, which is feeling tired from telling this story, cannot go on, and so I must finish this canto.*

Canto XVII

(Millalauco makes his embassy. The Spaniards leave the island and erect a fort on the hill of Penco; the Araucanians assault it. This canto also tells what happened meanwhile at the strongpoint of San Quintin.)

Nobody can ignore enemies or dubious friends – who are as much aware of you as you consider them to be cautious. As you listen to them you will come to recognise whether or not they are telling the truth; they always reveal their intentions through signs and arguments. When they think you act foolishly with your masks and strange behaviour they arouse you, set you on the right road – and by concealment expose the deceit. You see the target and finally attain it, with all its pros and the cons, interest and damages. No talk is so double-edged and evasive that nothing can be inferred from it. My heart is not so full of artifice that no conceit can penetrate it; to this end tongues always finally do their job, especially if they sense that what they hear is confidential. Speech never fails to give a sign, but silence never reveals a secret. However observant one is, nothing is harder than to recognise a fool who keeps silent.

It is vital for a captain to be properly informed about the nature and condition of his enemy – of his intentions, designs and resources, so as to know whether a certain course of action is prudent or reckless, light or heavy in movement, negligent or diligent, incautious or astute – diverse, indeterminate or resolved.

And so we see that the barbarous Senate, to learn the enemy's intentions, had sent cautious Millalauco to them in the guise of a friend. With a two-faced countenance, appearing very polite (as I said before) turning his face to all parties – he raised his voice, speaking thus:

“Worthy Captains and company: I am a peace emissary from the Araucanian State, with the voice and authority of its great Senate. Do not think that through fear or cowardice we ever sank to infamy and perfidy in order to procure a necessary remedy. You well know that the great renown of Arauca is growing and that our state defends foreign people under its control. We also realise that, driven by your Christian zeal, you come with great moderation and discipline to spread your doctrine. You seem to have proved your case by your actions. Your great renown proclaims this in a clear, high voice. I have come to you to make sure, on our side, for the sake of all whom I represent, that the offer of peace so much desired will be acceptable to my chiefs.

“I trust that the distinguished Senate, having heard your case and deliberated on it carefully, making a reasoned assessment, will accept the peace terms offered: that these are imposed under fair and honest conditions which do not take advantage of a simple and generous people. If inviolable faith is sworn and you graciously, firmly accept our offer of total cooperation, we can give free assent to its terms with honour on both sides and a just settlement. Without this, our subjects and estates will come to harm. We unconditionally

accept Emperor Charles as friend and Lord and of our own free will offer him our service and obedience. But if you pursue your ends through violence, we will eat you alive in front of your own sons; you will see our swords crossed over our self-same breasts. As a plain measure you are free to raise your royal banner on this ground. Its weapons laid down, the State will accept you with open arms, recognising that benign heaven calls it to a secure and enduring peace; let the past be buried in perpetual silence.”

Here he stopped speaking; following custom, he made a caress, always satisfying our will and his malice – and the barbarian power, seeming to ebb, gave us to understand that they were weak and that there was an abundance of treasure at hand. Don Garcia heard the representation and acknowledged it graciously. He replied that he was grateful for the offer of friendship: in the name of the king he would show his good intent – with terms which not only would respect them, but would actually improve their lot through strenuous effort.

For further confirmation he got two servants to bear gifts – clothes of 1,000 different colours, jerkins, glass beads, garments and insignia suitable for noble captains and elders, being received by Millalauco as terms were being discussed. So with the aura of a grateful friend asking to be given a *carte blanche*, acting with his customary diligence, he turned to the boat he had just left. As the sun rose over the land he was received cordially by all that noble company. Having seen the dispatch and having observed recent events, the chiefs divided their assembly. Giving a show of scattering the people they went back to their houses of peace – where they silently, secretly prepared their clandestine weapons, pushing the general will of the people to go along with innovations.

We Spaniards, suspicious (not without cause), stayed there for over two months, withstanding the floods and savage winds of the implacable winter. But when that time had passed we wanted to know the Araucanians’ intentions, so resolved to leave our island camp and make our base on the mainland.

One hundred and thirty strong young men could be seen on our field – brave, industrious – to be counted among the most robust – surreptitiously supplied with weapons and equipment; they took special care to leave nothing to chance. In order to observe the sea from a small hill, they erected a wall with cement foundations, surrounded by a broad ditch, where our small force could be lodged safe from harm until the horses arrived for us to continue with our expedition.

Having left for the mainland they knew that the barbarians’ plan – secretly gathering arms while showing a front of friendship – had been scotched. If any blow were struck against them to break their morale, they would come to peace through pure fear. This was a fancy far removed from common sense – to think that the proud Araucanians would accept peace at any price, coming as they did with their weapons in their hands. The young men assembled at lightning speed, unaided and with no more protection than the dark night.

Also in this country, when Virgo extended the short day, reclaiming the variable hours

usurped by the night – before dawn had banished the night stars, the top of the hill came into view, full of men and materials. Some, with bars, bills and hoes, opened up the deep ditches and signs; others, with hooks and broad knives, axes and saws, skilfully cut big logs from tree trunks, and having fixed them in the ground, they raised crossbeams and made a wall, screened by bundles of sticks. *Not with such fervour did the people of Tyre labour on building their famous city; caring and efficient, diligent and determined, they went about their business. Nor did Caesar, when so rapidly throwing up the miraculous wall of Dirrachio to shelter his scattered army, unnoticed by his hostile son-in-law.*

The mountain was completely crowned by our wall, surrounded by a deep, broad ditch and fortified by eight big pieces of ordnance. The banner of King Philip of Spain was raised in Arauco, taking possession of that state in the name of his formerly renounced Father. Having held a conference, more through fear than through courage, the people decided it was an unheard-of feat of daring that in little more than a day, those 130 men could undertake such an operation against a state so proud, so feared.

Our men withdrew to the security of the fort, whose lofty location and greatly feared firepower made their path easy going, divided as it was by a well-arranged series of screens. There we placed ourselves under the protection of Fortune.

* * *

The town crier, careering through Arauco, blew up the numbers of the depleted Christian army and frightened the people with a hollow rumour. Such a vain noise made the uncertain sometimes seem certain, and to multiply certainty if certainty were bad. When his voice had reached the ears of our sworn enemies, not thinking of the terms guaranteed by both sides – in a flash we became aware of the numbers and weapons ranged against us. Without more ado, they proceeded to attack with blood and fire.

By our reckoning over 2,000 men were assembled in Talcaguano; the brave young Gracolano, of great mind and courage, said in a loud voice: “Oh great Caupolicán; if my offer has any value, I promise that in tomorrow’s assault, our standard will be brandished from the heights. And so, sir, I want my efforts to satisfy you and everyone: with this well-used lance, I pledge to open a path through the enemy breasts, and that my hands will be the first to take away the enemy’s weapons and equipment – though the climb is hard and all the universe impedes me.” So he said; because the stars were already visible, a squadron of barbarians, concealed by the night, made a fast march towards the fort and stopped in a deep ravine at the foot of the mountain, well hidden, keeping silence until the break of dawn.

That night I could not take a moment’s rest; there was already danger and confusion, mingled with anxious fantasy which I needed to unload from my memory with my pen, by writing this history. In the deathly silence of that dark night, in the midst of the others’ slumbers, wanting to do my writing, there was an accident: an icicle fell on my head, and suddenly blanked my vision. As I struggled in vain to continue, the pen fell from my hand. I wanted to go on, but it was impossible; that accident prevented it: the acute pain numbed me, stifled my efforts. But when the agony had passed and I was restored to my normal self, something remained of that

torment, as if it had been part of a lingering illness. Then, with heavy breath, giving vent to my longing, my tired eyes, inflamed by the blow, closed. My tired limbs were relaxed, and entered a pleasant sleep, my consciousness then being concentrated on the most noble part.

But scarcely had my broken body gone to rest, when I heard a mighty tumult which felt like an earthquake: with a haughty gesture and words of fury, a woman thrust herself before me – from her form and her great personality I recognised the robust and surly war goddess Bellona. Covered from feet to waist and waist to head in a shining suit of chain mail, shield on arm and broadsword at her side, she brandished a hard spear in her right hand, surrounded by the horrible Furies, her livid face ablaze with bellicose fury. She said to me:

“O fearful young man: raise your spirits and confidence, recognise the time of destiny, be happy that it offers you good fortune and adventure. Sluggish laziness dulls the heart and mutes hope, and breathes more into what you want than heaven is bound to do, if you understand.

“You came keen to write – as the evidence shows. Proud arms and bitter conflict have never disrupted the flow of your pen; you have always been faithful to your work, moved only by the same function as mine. I want to take you to an area where you can expand without restriction. It is a fertile ground full of flowers, where you will have abundant material in the form of far greater, more famous wars to feed your creative flow. If you want the love of ladies to celebrate your sweet pain, you will have more material, greater prospects than you ever had in the past – or would have anywhere else in the future.

“Follow me” she said at last. In wonder I turned whence she had come, with broad strides and a courageous heart, leaving, on the left and the right, those mountains to which the Atlante and the Apennines cannot compare in density and roughness. We reached a great plain where with a liberal and skilful hand, nature showered richness and beauty in its varied marvellous work, mixing among the leaves and verdure the white irises, red roses, jonquils, white lilies, jasmine and violets. There the clear murmuring fountains crossed the delightful seat; the breath of warm winds caressed the green grass and flowers; the brightly coloured birds flew among the abundant trees, their songs blending in sweet harmony.

Spread out in circles was an abundance of beautiful girls, some playing various games, others picking fragrant flowers, singing sweet amorous songs, playing citterns and lyres, nimble satyrs, fauns and wood nymphs. The fresh light had appeared to illuminate all pastimes and exercises. Whoever pursued them was already on the right side, doing the hard job of Diana’s lineage – then there came the pig, the deer, the hare, chamois and goats, frolicking in the grass and flowers. Whoever pursued the wounded deer, crossing the plain to the mountains, whoever trailed the tiring pig was helped by brave greyhounds. Some arrogant ones pursued the brightly coloured birds – some the herons, some the ravens; here the zealous stag, and there the hind.

I stayed there for a while. Then all of a sudden I could look no further, as I was surrounded by timorous eyes; there the mild breeze wafted, full of sweet scents, to the summit of the hill, crowned in green grass and flowers. It was so high that a light mist could not cap its height, so it was not without fear that I looked down from my position near the sky; from this vantage point the great expanse of the broad plain spread out to the ends of the barbarian realm, including its remotest and most hidden parts.

Bellona had arrived there. Seeing me, she said: "I gave you a short time to see what is promised; you can detain me no longer. Look at the movement of that great army, the thick, black powdery smoke in the area of Flanders and France, above an important fortress.

"Since Charles V triumphed over so many enemies and nations, and as an unconquered leader took over the northern and southern regions, since his fortune and his estates assured his ends and claims, he chose the right time to abdicate from the imperial throne. Moved by the pious zeal with which he had fulfilled his public office, now concentrating little on the earth – according to what he had conceived in his breast, he turned his eyes and aspirations to heaven. The burden he had carried on his shoulders he passed on to his son, renouncing all his kingdoms, titles and estates.

"The son Philip, seeing the career of his prosperous, retired father, to sustain the real hope which had always supported his works, at the first opportunity, assembled a massive army to humble the arrogant presumptions of his enemy – France. That is San Quentin you see before you with its major prison and a spacious square, which in vain rebelled to overthrow him, facing the fury of King Philip. It was within the jurisdiction of the Almirante, under whose command this great people talked of war, and the defence of their realm.

"As you can see, the enemy camp was divided into three parts. Caceres, with his division, on the right hand, where Philip's standard flew; the bustling Navarrete to the left, with count Mega straight ahead, and on the other side Julian, with forces from three nations – Spaniards, Germans and Walloons.

"We then reached the time when we could see the pursuit of the struggle, see the forces of King Philip scale the walls without ladders – that that proud assault and the hard struggle which followed it, finally making a breach in the French fort which against inexorable fate had no defence, no last redoubt.

"I agree to leave at this moment, to put myself in the midst of those squadrons, and arouse many hearts with new fire. Now you can observe the different armies and nations, noting the fortunes of one and the other, giving each one its due."

Then the irate Goddess and her company vanished into thin air, and in one instant, without twisting their path, they rapidly descended to San Quintin where, stoking the fire that was

already raging, they joined with her friend Discordia, who went among the host and companies infusing their entrails with rage. In this, the proud army, already moved by the last signal, ran in a thick dust-clouded mass to the battered, defended wall.

Who would have such copious power of language to describe all that I saw there? *Although my flow does not reach that far, I'll say what I can in the next Canto.*

Canto XVIII

(King Philip's forces besiege San Quintin and make a victorious entry. The Araucanians take the Spanish fort.)

Who could presume to reduce our valour and grandeur to small terms and a brief summary, belittling such glory by writing in a humble style? Who runs on the prosperous field in imaginative mood, with a light touch, striving so hard to draw conclusions from the materials that he deconstructs and belittles the event?

I believe so much in taking risks that I lay myself open to being taken for a fool; then, when coming to my senses, I can actually see beyond the bounds of common sense. But my wish to give what you desire has always drawn me along this road. Perhaps my crude pen and the clumsiness of my dumb tongue dilutes the substance. And so it is your favour (source of my presumption and temerity) I ask, as this can strengthen my weak grasp of the situation.

Your Majesty: *if you allow me to include everything then I will not be constrained to deny anything.* This permission will spiritedly cast to the winds this hoarse, fearful voice unworthy to recount such great events. Trusting in your largesse and in the justice of my request I hope, sir, to be heard, and to have your support in continuing what I have started. In the last Canto I described how the field was attacked from three sides and breached by the artillery.

Running at speed, countering the blows and defensive thrusts, breaking and clashing with fiery breasts and fast hands, and breaching the pummelled walls by the readiest sides and parts, the two sides faced each other, testing their arms and souls.

* * *

Meanwhile, in Europe . . .

With a show of courage, weapons and defensive devices, the French resisted the assault and the ferocious souls of their adversaries – though the latter surmounted many obstacles and broke the sturdiest fortifications with terrifying courage and tenacity. In the defended entrances there was great struggle and confusion, a mass of obstructions – dead foreigners, blows and wounds from powerful, gallant arms, heads hanging from necks, cut to pieces, bodies chopped up – for neither breastplates nor helmets could withstand the crude rigour of the swords.

The square was defended on all sides with furious energy and bravery. It was quite something to see the mass of battered weapons and armour, the frightful artillery, the bombs and fireworks thrown with powder, tar, pitch, resin, oil, lead, sulphur and turpentine. There poured forth thick hails of lances and arrows, rocks, boards, wooden panels which they wrenched from the walls and roofs. The flaming rage and massive tension did not cease. Those men of both sides turned into pure fire, blood and fury; they wounded, knocked down,

killed. Some defended the entrance without fear, free-spirited and confident. Others fought on through fear for their lives, placing their hopes in their efforts. Those who could not hold on to life, wrought vengeance with the lives of their foes, whose fallen bodies blocked the enemy path.

As the indomitable fury and violence suddenly opened up an avenue. If it met opposition, the trapped water boiled and swelled, at the end, with a strong attack proclaiming that the way was open to break down the defences and seize them with violent fury. And so the debilitated French tried to stem the mighty tide of Philip's destiny. When they could fight no more they submitted to his fury. The sector where Caceres was located gave entrance to the blood-drenched enemy. Although here Almirante resisted the onslaught, his forces were not strong enough to stem the fury thrust against them. He remained imprisoned with the others, and before the proud, victorious company, leaving eternal pity and everlasting memory, he departed – in the wake of destiny and victory.

Then, on the other side, where the skilful Navarrete struggled, without most of the French being there – the Spaniards entered through the power of pure steel – in spite of proud Mars who strengthened the French arms, made great destruction, waged total war in order to gain territory. Andalot, in charge of the defence, was taken prisoner during Julian Romero's first attack. Fortune broke the impasse, opening up the path to suspended Fate, who gave Philip her hand to enter France as the absolute conqueror.

Then fear and cold despair cut into the hearts of the enfeebled people; a general lament and alarm broke the thick air and the high canopy of the sky. They threw their weapons to the ground; choosing the option of survival, they agreed to take a miserable flight, abandoning the square to save their skins. But the conquerors, seeing their great fear and lack of resistance, held back their weapons, *so as not to besmirch their victory with unnecessary bloodshed.*

Battering the sturdy doors, they broke the reinforced bolts. Some scaled the walls with their pikes and entered the precinct by the windows and roofs – here and there breaking and unhinging. Without respect for quiet places they ransacked the houses from top to bottom then cautiously, but without stopping, ran on. *Just as, suddenly, a furious fire – when it ignites in a district suddenly alarms the people, who run in panic and wait for rescue – all over the place, entering, exiting, some dragging people along, others laden with the furniture which had escaped the flames* – Just so did the proud, victorious people, with fast hands and light feet, greedy for the alluring booty, open doors, windows and cellars, rapidly, ruthlessly pulling out coffers, carpets, beds and cupboards, from the most to the least important – but without making a single gain.

Neither did the shouts, pleas and quarrels, which penetrated distant skies, nor thoughts of widows and orphan girls temper their insatiable greed before they broke from them. Without mercy they attacked the most heavily defended points, thinking there would be more loot

where the resistance was stronger. The girls ran through the streets unguarded, seemingly oblivious of danger, their beautiful faces fraught with stress, lamenting their bitter destiny. And the wretched nuns, breaking their rules, burst forth from their enclosure, borne by terror, ran madly here and there.

But before they entered worthy King Philip had commanded the forces to treat the women and the houses of prayer with respect, decreeing that they should not make dangerous quarrels or cruel interrogations, that he would honestly give each soldier his bounty from the capture and sack.

The lost women, ravaged by fear, desperately wandered hither and thither. Under Philip's orders they were rounded up and taken to a secure place, to be protected from the fury of war by reliable guards: though their houses had been ransacked their honour was preserved. The proud soldiers, obedient to the Christian command, showed restraint, putting the brakes on their initial impulses. The riot, tumult and intermingling of the people, the massive confusion and panic ravaged the city; many fires flared up.

Suddenly the flame was nourished, throwing out masses of sparks. Fanned by the fresh breeze, it reached up towards the stars. The wretched people made their complaints with sad voices, their tender eyes turned to heaven, their loss of consciousness intensifying their grief.

On all sides pitiful cries resonated through the air; the miserable, terrified French threw themselves at the enemy's weapons, shamefully opting for the way of dying that they had refused – weak as they were, trapped, they burned in the raging flames. But the great clemency of the devout King blunted the proud weapons; all the fire and fury was put out by an instant remedy. Finally, without further resistance his forces were established in San Quintin, with a clear path open to Paris and the keys to France in his hand.

The sun went down, little by little, to illuminate the Southern Hemisphere when I, who happily admired all I had heard in my canto, saw a woman who spoke to me – her clothes whiter than snow, grave and most venerable in her demeanour – with the air of a highly esteemed person.

"If the things I say, as a sure and truthful prophecy, seem hard to believe, trust me that it is neither fiction nor fantasy, but that The Eternal Father commands, from his heavenly throne, his strongest subjects – Fate, Fortune, Time and Death."

This war – and the deeply rooted rancour between France and Spain, culminated in treaties and territorial partitions proposed by each side – through which the Duke of Savoy recovered his estates, and with many other judicious measures conducive to the mutual well-being of France and Spain.

To guarantee a lasting peace through a sense of brotherhood and a firm agreement, a lasting bond was forged between King Henry and King Philip. But this decree of High Heaven and

Divine Ordinance was soon unmade by a crude, premature death. At that time France was corrupt, adulterating her Catholic law. They denied the obedience they owed to their king, and committed sacrilege. Through their loose living they swelled the ranks of evil, joining the infidel army ranged against the Church and the rightful king. By such insolent sins, the Kingdom would nearly be destroyed, and Charles reduced to dire straits by these perfidious soldiers. The sumptuous churches would be wantonly desecrated and pulled down, releasing a flood of suffering.

But your king, foreseeing the potential for future devastation, attacked this pestilence in Spain with swift provenance and all the necessary rigour, with fire and the sword. When this plague was cured and the enemy quelled, he furiously moved against the East, sending his fleet and army to Penon. Although he did not achieve his goal at the first attempt, the second try succeeded; vicious Penon was suppressed, leaving the path secure and menacing the Moorish perimeter. But because of the ports and the winter he withdrew his victorious fleet.

Then there came to Spain two Hungarian princes, of high degree, sons of Caesar Maximus and Maria, daughter of Carlos and sister of Philip; they came to court to enhance their happiness. One was Rodolfo, the other Ernesto – both eager to gain renown.

After promising great hopes for his lofty labours in this small estate, growing in years and virtue – much deserving praise, through which he saw himself shining in splendour, a person of supreme courage, nurtured by Baron Diestrigan, a person worthy to educate such princes.

In the following year the mighty armada of the powerful infidel menaced all of Christendom. It sailed against the Poniente with such a host and such a mass of equipment that the coasts trembled. They reached the island of Malta, which was 20 leagues all around. There the Grand Master and his Knights, who assisted in the midst of this, with other foreign captains, offered their lives as a remedy, always constant and whole. They long resisted the bitter siege: what they did in the defence can only be considered miraculous. They were to be defeated on both sides, by land and sea, above and below, and the fort of San Telmo breached by steel. Such an occurrence would put the Christians into great danger, because the Turkish fleet would have free entry to the port from two approaches.

We shall see some memorable deeds – difficult, dangerous enterprises, fearful souls in panic when their hopes seem jeopardised, strongpoints, walls and ditches devastated, crude wounds, pitiful deaths, momentous events, boundless successes worthy of being written up for eternity.

When human effort is not enough, and force humbled to labour, the wall will be razed to the ground, the ditch filled and hope come crashing down. When the bloody, inhuman barbarian wields the sword above them – and when our swords are brandished, all will know what King Philip can do, and fear will strike into their hearts.

With only a fraction of their fleet, and a small number of soldiers, guided by Fortune and Credit, the Ottoman horde retreated, their limp sails in the wind, having suffered incredible losses and damage. *The siege of Malta had been raised.*

The following year Suleiman moved with a powerful army against Caesar Augustus, Holy Roman Emperor. His force rapidly crossed Pannonia, leaving Transylvania to the East, and behind them the broad province of Dalmatia, to reach the confines of Corvacia. He laid siege to Signat, a strong, isolated place, for four weeks. Finally, with no relief forthcoming, it was occupied by proud Suleiman. But this difficult enterprise had hardly been completed when angry death, reaching the cramped location, put an end to his discourse.

* * *

Meanwhile, in Flanders, those states which had rejected God in those days, disturbed the peace, infected with perverse errors and heresies, and conspiring against King Philip tried various modes of malice, bringing to the boil things which had long remained latent.

* * *

Also, with the desire to set themselves free the Moors, in the prosperous province of Granada, had an uprising, denying their oath of allegiance to the King; that altercation, beyond any shadow of doubt, could not be resolved by negotiation – only at the cost of great devastation and loss of worthy blood.

To this war went a noble young man, disguised in humble attire. His distinguished imperial lineage meant that he would be certain to go on different missions, as the Fates had promised him an adventure, which would go down in history. He was Don Juan son of Carlos, whom no-one recognised. He remained in disguise until his father, at death's door, proclaimed the identity of his son, whom he had reared to be free, open energetic and brave. I cannot describe or reveal any more about Don Juan at this point. Suffice it to say that he made war on the rebellious Moors on his first expedition, and with their fortresses breached and occupied, forced them to retreat into the mountains, where he tightened his grip on them until he had finally taken control of the entire land, deporting the seeds of evil to different provinces.

When this war was over there came, accompanied by a great entourage, Ana, Queen of Spain, to be married to King Philip. The famous wedding was celebrated with great pomp and ceremony in Old Seville, one-time seat of the illustrious kings of Castile.

Then the two heirs were named by the Emperor, who that day was pleased to draw up a new agreement in his estates to make a king of Rudolf of Hungary. Having embarked in Genoa, they passed through Lombardy, via the beautiful Danube, to reach the famous city of Vienna.

When the disturbances of that time had abated, when the bellicose fury and battles seemed to decline and subside, the armies of the inhuman Turks in the barbarous regions rose once more

against the powerful Venetians. Gathering a mighty fleet from all their provinces, they unleashed their fury on nearby Cyprus and with brutal, rigorous swords occupied the island; they entered Famagusta, already betrayed by deceit. Then, in their arrogance, they planned to sail for Italy, despising all the rest of the world, and even the power of heaven, born of your sins and guilt.

The Lord Jesus above who, when merit was lacking, paid mankind's debt with his blood and passion and with a mere groan took upon himself the punishment deserved by others, declared himself to be in your favour because of your piety, and with a decisive blow broke the pride of the ambitious barbarian. Bearing the burdens of sinning Christians he wielded his powerful arm against the perfidious enemy. He also inspired the formation of a league, whereby the Pope and the Venetian Senate joined forces with His Catholic Majesty.

By the grace of all these parties, there was elected as General of the League, a flourishing young man, who, in his boyhood, had gone out unknown into the world in humble attire. *But I am not yet allowed to disclose the details. It is enough that you get a hint of it.* Then you will get a clearer idea of the destiny he followed.

But if you want this day to know of future events, as yet unheard of, and the most singular occurrence that has ever gone down in history, when perhaps you pass the ravine where Rauco ran, you will see at its bottom a tame and gentle horse. It is good to follow this course with care until you come into a wide plain, at the end of which you will see on one side a rough entrance and a dark forest, and as you go in ambush of the timid deer you will find, in the midst of the thicket, beneath a bare, rugged crag, a small, hidden dwelling. There, because of it being an uninhabitable place, with no trace of any other person, lives a venerable old man who was once a famous soldier – whom you know as the unapproachable Fiton, great magician and sorcerer, who informs you of many marvellous things which will happen in the future.

I do not want to say any more touching future events, as it seems that with what the present has to offer, you have ample material in order to pursue your interests. This is a great opportunity for you, since power has been granted to me alone to say what I have heard. If the fury and courage of Mars put your pen out of joint and you want to mix in other material, soft and pleasurable, to modify its roughness, consider the beauty of the ladies of Spain, whom I admire because of the goodness they radiate, as love does not burn all the land.

But firstly, what is important to me is that you trust your own eyes, anticipating the impending danger so that you can forestall it in good time. When it comes to the crunch, do not trust wholly in your strength of my assistance. Though you will wish to set yourselves against me, you will close your eyes so as not to see me.

Oh human condition! At the instant when I am forbidden to turn my face – that alone would be enough to prevent me from satisfying my whetted appetite – and so, without hoping for more than before, and proceeding with my sound counsel, I will turn my eyes, and suddenly

see (if I may say so) Paradise. In a fertile, salubrious plain, surrounded by lush plants and trees, where the sky showed itself to be the most beautiful, and the fresh green plain was decked in 1,000 flowers on each side of the clear and rippling brook. So much beauty was there, with room to grow to its full extent.

There were the ladies in the circle, who flourished in happy Spain. The clear sun, the moon and the stars were obscured in their presence. And on their heads, all those pure, fragrant garlands circled in 1,000 different ways with fair pleats, knots and bows. Into this, with extraordinary speed and fury, drawn by the warm air, the high summit left the mountain, descending to the fertile plain where (if my memory is not playing tricks with me) I saw my guide at my right hand – looking panic-stricken – somewhat afraid that he had put me to such risk and peril. When he put his feet on the ground, the greedy eyes dilated, free from the rough, coarse veil which had, until then, obstructed my view. An amorous fire and a tender chill coursed through my veins – the rebellious spirit and hardened heart wanted to be subjected to love.

I wished to occupy myself with amorous works and songs, mellow my style and not care about those bitter, bloody wars. I felt a great yearning to learn about that area, and about beautiful women – especially the one whom I saw, through good fortune, at my feet.

She was of soft disposition but mature in her calm discretion; her star, her destiny and my happiness, inclined to admire her. I who, captivated by beauty, wanted to know her name, read a placard placed at her feet, which said: AT THE BASE OF THE TRUNK, DONNA MARIA.

To know more about her, I was turning my face to the cautious guide when suddenly a hubbub and wild discordant clashing of barbarian arms woke me from my sweet dream. “To arms! To arms – quickly!” and the sound of their diverse voices and instruments seemed to rupture the heavens.

Confused and half asleep, I ran to the nearest weapons, put myself at a vantage point, in a prepared position when, on the rough slope before me, I saw a mass of men, making ferocious cries, against the backcloth of the roseate dawn. Then also on both sides, with no fewer cries and insults, so many men could be seen that could have struck fear into the heart of Mars himself, for all his temerity.

But in order to proceed, stage by stage, as I am tired, I cannot proceed now. *I will describe the full details in the next canto.*

Canto XIX

(This canto describes the Araucanians' attack on the Spaniards in their fort of Penco; Gracolano's assault on the wall; the battle that took place with the soldiers and sailors who stayed behind to guard the ships.)

Beautiful ladies, if my feeble song does not begin to do you justice, and if my humble verses are not developed into amorous conceits and works, my burden is great – and I must say that there are 1,000 unemployed writers who have ample material and scope to work on that night and day.

And though I see myself at some remove from this presupposition I will persevere with the Grand Design, which I must complete, according to my obligations. If I lack the suitable adornments and trappings, my intention is sufficient – to do all I can to present you with the facts, *however much my presentation is lacking in artistry*.

But the Spanish people, who complain (with just cause, as they have commissioned this work), do not leave me room to write of other things – as the barbarian army afflicted them, surrounding the fort in an instant with terrible menace and blood-curdling cries (as you have heard in the last canto). When three big squadrons gathered on the highest mountain, having seen the ditch and the wall, they recognised their goal. When the signal was given, all the squadrons advanced, wielding their swords as if to say that nobody would be spared from death.

Young Gracolano, not having forgotten the arrogant offer and the great promise, surrounded by various high plumage, brandishing a big, tough pike, came a great distance ahead of them, breaking through the thick smoke and the driving hail of bullets and arrows, reinforced by cannon fire. Having reached his goal, he broke his long pike into three, and attacked furiously. Fixing his firm stump in the ground, he jumped over the broad ditch; climbing, with the help of the same pike, he victoriously leaped on the wall, in spite of the arms ranged against him – lances, pikes, swords and crossbows. No raging caged bull charged at the barrier so impatiently, nor was anyone so resisted by massed arms and men than was that gallant barbarian, who intrepidly, breaking what seemed to be the most secure defence, jumped forcefully on the defended wall.

There the missiles were let loose – though it was impossible to direct them properly. In an attempt to gain the plaza, he dealt blows and stabs with great skill, putting his mighty chest and shoulders into his assault. In the midst of the weapons, on foot, he fulfilled his promise. With great tenacity and little fear he attempted to die in their midst. In his vain attempt, he was wounded at many points and fought on. Mad Fortune held back the death blow. Trying to reach this absurd objective, he threw himself among the weapons, like a foaming, rabid dog. The more he was wounded, the more he attacked. Despising danger and life he undertook the most hazardous enterprise, wrecking 1,000 swords aimed at his obstinate breast.

Coming to such a place alone, propelled by his bold confidence – not despairing of his mission, but with diminished hope, he took a soldier by the arms and seized his lance, thinking of throwing himself over it to get over the ditch and save his life.

But unstable Fortune, already tired of being the saviour of his life, then gave passage to a stone, slung by some gallant arm, which struck him in the temple. A great part of the stone sank into his flesh, but then it bounced off and flew up into the air. Like the Trojan Euricio who, seeing the timid dove, pierced it in full flight with the curved path of his arrow, making its body twist and lurch to the ground like a round ball, so the wounded young man fell dead in the deep ditch. The wretched body fell, gashed with 36 wounds – apart from the one which dealt the coup de grace. The pike which the barbarian had gained in fair and honest fight was thrown down in the ditch with such strength that a piece of it was later discovered – far away.

But young Pinol, who had promised to accompany him, joined in his attack as far as the ditch. He did not venture so great a jump, as he saw his valiant comrade sprawled out, and then saw the pike above him; nevertheless he seized the pike, jumped and landed lightly on his feet. But as there is no skill, no dexterity which can prevail against the power of Fate, swift, light feet are not enough to escape from the hands of Death, and whoever thinks he will escape, the mighty blow from Death's arm reaches faster. Thus it came to the nimble barbarian, changing its plan and path. He had scarcely walked to paces when two big cannon balls struck him, piercing him from the back to the chest at one time, with one blow, it cut him into two parts; he did not give up his soul as quickly as did one soldier of two who tried to come to his rescue. He did not lose the precious lance, but retrieved it at the risk of his own life.

Then there was a great sounding of trumpets. They lifted the great pikes on high, and furiously, making an equal spin, reached the ditch with a big attack. Forcefully renewing their assault, they discharged their missiles and arrows, in such quantity that they seemed to cover all the spacious ground.

At that time, Martin de Elvira, who was also called 'our Spaniard' saw from afar the lost lance which Gracolano had seized. With a laudable sense of shame, burning with anger, determined to restore his honour, he sallied forth through a narrow doorway, to combat – alone and without a lance. With a daring young man who went ahead, despising heaven and earth, gigantic in stature, brandishing a spear in each hand, here and there, with gallant gestures, waving his sturdy pike right and left, he tried to pierce his enemy's breast. Making a big jump which carried him on 6 paces, the gallant, reckless Spaniard almost saw himself in the arms of death, but in a spirited manner, fleet of foot, he girded his strength, thinking to seize the pike in his hand, but this hope was in vain.

The Indian, with great skill and agility, jumped lightly back over the ground, and brandishing his thick, hard pike, tried to finish off the struggle with the other; but the alert Spaniard who tried to enter, giving him space, dodged the pike; having done so he rapidly closed with him, chest to chest.

Seizing a hidden dagger which he was carrying, he pierced the sides of that brave soul 5 or 6 times. The mortal barbarian, already drained of blood, gave up his furious soul, his enormous body falling on the cold ground, already empty of life and spirit.

The valiant Spaniard, who saw his enemy laid out and victory certain, recovered the pike and regained his honour. He proudly retraced his steps to the doorway, where he was recognised by his friends. In a flash, with no further check, the door was opened. Once inside, he was happily received with cries of applause.

Then, on all sides, they cleared the plaza of the enemy who, determined to conquer or die, threw themselves against the blows and missiles. Stacked on top of the dead, the living rose up to throw themselves into the fray, from where the sure aim revealed the hidden white. Some quickly filled in the ditch with branches, logs and earth; others, thinking themselves lightweight, risked dangerous jumps, and those who came last tried so hard to jump ahead, that they landed amongst the others. But the ditch was rapidly blocked and flattened by the many killed and wounded by our arquebuses, by gun rests and by others thrown and fallen. Across it, the daring enemy attacked, causing terror, pushing towards the most strongly guarded points to cross swords with our men.

Pursuing their daring endeavour, they renewed hand-to-hand combat. But others, with even greater daring, climbed over the wall with their pikes, so no high place was secure against the barbarian assault. There was no part, however rough, which they did not scale to pursue their fight. Our men, mounted on the wall, beat them back, impaled and wounded them, and with a hail of bullets, pushed them back. But this severe battering did not slow down the attack from the others, the ranks ever swelling, the fury of the rough blows growing, breaching the defended walls. Covered by their concave shields, they pushed us into such a crush that the situation got impossible.

At that point Tucapel, furious, gallantly appeared on the wall, covered in shining mail, wielding a strong knotty stick – like the Lion of Libya. He broke into the tight ranks of the timid squadron, and in horrendous fury cleared the clogged path. And so the furious barbarian ran along the wall, knocking down whoever stood in his path, crossing the same people and arrows. I wish I had tongue and voice enough to portray in its reality the singular strength and courage which Tucapel showed that day. Neither the Spaniards' stout pikes nor their bullets, their strong arms and sturdy breasts, were strong enough to withstand the assault. Piles of men and weapons were pulled down

without being able to harm them. Not prepared to accept that barrier, Tucapel daringly threw himself into the midst of the throng.

Adding to the peril of our forces, he wielded his powerful mace, pummeling some, fracturing others, always gaining more in ground and esteem. He fought on, resisting the hard blows rained on him by weapons and men, ever wounding, right and left, with great risk to his own life, doing much damage to us.

Peteguelen's band attacked from the west, and in spite of our resistance reached the top of the bastion. His brave, burning heart had spread through his entrails a bellicose ardour, as if he were in the prime of life. It did not last long, for soon a bullet from our well-prepared soldiers struck him in the head, ending his prosperous day. After this, another piece was fired in the same direction, reaching Guampicol, who followed Peteguelen, Surco, Longomilla and Lebopia.

The people who had remained on the ship, seeing the sudden activity, jumped up. Some seized weapons and rushed to the boat, others swam to reach the Marina – every man for himself, nobody working together. And so, swimming and rowing, with great difficulty, they crossed the turbulent, swirling sea and set foot on the bank almost simultaneously. Then, with discipline and good order, they formed a tight squadron, marching to help their beleaguered comrades.

Scarcely had they landed when, from down below, an enemy squadron attacked them, making a furious charge with bloodcurdling yells. First there came rushing the lithe Feniston, an intrepid you man who wanted to come ahead of the others, wishing – and presuming – to distinguish himself.

Our men, with discipline and daring, following his course and his firm intent, attacked the enemy; none of them stood much chance of survival. He attacked Feniston, and with no less resolute boldness, the skilful Julian de Valenzuela, sword in hand and shield to his chest. Swift Feniston was the first one there to anticipate the assault, making a light, uncalculated jump, with which he threw a heavy stick. But Valenzuela, shield on high, parried the blow with two hands, leaving his assailant dethroned, as if a mountain had fallen on top of him. Under the broad shield at his head (so powerful and heavy was the blow), the young man was stunned; but then, although struck down, he stood up, and jumping on his assailant, seized the mace which was aimed at him from above. Because of his great weight, and the strength with which he swung it, a great part of the log went into the earth. Valenzuela, seeing the barbarian's predicament, and the time he had at his disposal – fleet of foot and fast in arm, pierced his foe's chest with the sword, and taking he hot, red weapon, swept it up to the middle of his jawbone.

The Araucanian foolishly threw his arms around, not knowing where, but the young man tried another ploy; in retaliation, he seized his dagger and, with all the strength he could muster, plunged it three times into his adversary's body – making him expire, leaving his feet and arms nearly frozen.

At that point nobody had a moment to remain idle; each one had to jump at what was most necessary and dangerous. The clash of arms was so tumultuous and rapid that the sky seemed to be detached from its hinges, and come crashing down to earth.

On the other side, having reached the wall, always with rage and boiling blood, the battle was going badly for us. In the confusion victory was in doubt; hacked mail waved loose in the air and many streams of hot, foaming blood poured into the ditch, so that the corpses were floating in it.

So gallantly they struggled here and there, for the square and for their honour; some laboriously clambered over dead bodies, while some dead bodies fell on the living. Don Garcia de Mendoza and his men bravely defended their sector, making effective resistance against the barbarian fury. Meanwhile Don Felipe Hurtado, Don Francisco de Andia and Espinosa, don Simon Pereyra – a Portuguese, and Don Alonso Pacheco y Ortigosa stood against the Araucanian attack. They made a miraculous show of effort, resisting a huge number of insurgents with pure force and brave swords. Basco Xuarez too, Carillo and Don antonio de Cabrera, Arias Pardo, Riberos and Lasarte, Cordoba and Pedro de Olmos de Aguilera, having climbed to the top of the high bastion, wounded the swarming enemy, so as to keep the wall secure for the Spaniards. No less did Juan de Torres, Garnica and Campofrio, Don Martin de Guzman and Don Hernando, Pacho, Gutierrez, Zunia and Verrio, Ronquillo, Lira, Osorio, Vaca, Ovando proved themselves, fighting and doing things *that my talent, although free from obstructions, could not describe in full detail.*

The carnage and devastation spread so much that the Araucanians, on their side, lost their grip, and face to face, with coordinated steps, withdrew. Others, seeing the unpremeditated casualties, quit their mad endeavour, leaving Tucapel inside the fort, wounding, knocking down and dealing death. Undismayed, he burned with rabid rage and viciousness, furiously rushing back and forth in an extraordinary circle, violating Bustamenta and Mexia, knocking down Diego Perez and Saldana. *But as I have now gone on for so long, it is time to end this tale of destruction, and this canto.*

Canto XX

(The Araucanians withdraw with heavy losses. Tucapel breraks through his enemies and escapes, badly wounded. Tegalda tells Don Alonso de Ercilla about his extraordinary and burdensome endeavours.)

Nobody makes a promise without first reflecting on his own wealth and strength. In due course whoever does so will probably regret his decision. One's word is a binding commitment which should only be quit under the force of dire circumstances. It is a universal right and an express law to keep a promise to an enemy. However, in these wretched times standard practice is often far away from those laws. Some promises raise hopes which nobody keeps or honours. So when a vain and stupid confidence sustains us, floating on air, we finally come down to earth with a bump; *the damage far exceeds the initial expectations.*

I can say that when I am hard-worked, my memory sustains me. With care it supplies the words I say, well expressed, to complete this, so that the raw material – so sterile – which I have taken, promises finally to be a supreme work. And is it bad to take a pull at a slug of juice? Who puts me among thistles and thorns, to the sound of raucous trumpets and drums, enabling me to go through gardens and thickets picking fragrant flowers, mixing into the enterprises and requests tales, fictions, fables and loves, where I could run without limit and would receive all with pleasure?

There was discord, fire, blood, enmity, hate, rancour, cruelty and courage; stupidity, anger, temerity, vengeance and ferocity; death, destruction, rantings and atrocities which could cause loathing in Mars himself – exhausting greater riches than mine. But I must be patient, since I took on this obligation of my own free will. So I humbly beg you sir to pay heed to my tale of woe. No importunate barbarian would give me room to make excuses; such is the fury with which he comes to pressurise my hand.

Like a caged animal – now here now there – he opened up the bloody, bitter path, dealing equal damage to all with such pride as wild Mars undertakes on his fifth throne, seeing a way to the sky. Alone and unaided, badly wounded, he defeated the barbarian army and all the tempered steel directed at his strong, resilient breast. He found himself near a combed hill without a wall on one side; there he made a jump of more than twenty arm-lengths. As if he then had wings more secure than those of Daedalus, he threw himself on top of so as to seem supported by them, proved himself so agile that the jump achieved little, the gallant barbarian falling below like a light ounce or cougar. But he made a bad jump and a mass of missiles was thrown at him. The thought of them did not register, but their reality hit him before he landed. The discharge was so heavy that in a flash he was wounded in ten places – but not so badly as to make him fall nor to stall any of his footsteps. Coming down so grievously injured, then cursing his intention and the jump, he burned with a furious fire. More enraged

than ever, he ached to return to the fray and avenge the damage he had suffered. He was exasperated by the hill being cut off without a path.

Five or six times the difficult road and the credit of Fortune tempted him to think that he could do the impossible. Incited by courage and fury he ran back and forth, surrounding them on all sides, *like a hungry wolf surrounds an enclosure of lambs*. But, finally seeing that it was a vain plan, and that there was a hail of bullets on him, he drew back on one side to see the progress of the hard-fought battle, *like the sturdy falcon captures the heron in flight, insults the cowardly kite, and then takes to the sky with its prey in furious flight* so gallant Tucapel, shelving his audacious but futile plan, turned to another band, entering bloody combat at a disadvantage. Here the demoralised infidel band withdrew with heavy losses, following the banners heading for the hills.

But the great barbarian was not to be deflected from his aim. He made a strong attack on one band, striking many men left and right, giving them a terrible pasting, wounding and knocking them down so as to clear a path before him. Some remained there with their wounds, some were crippled; some cried, some complained, some fell here, some fell there – stunned. Some made room for him and he surged onwards, taking a broad path towards a squadron bristling with arms, propelled by the fury which the wild rays of the sun broke the stifling air and the thick clouds.

In this way Tucapel swathed through the Christian squadron to reach his comrades who were beating an orderly retreat. We saw that, like cranes flying in the summer, no-one in this long drawn-out band strayed ahead or lagged behind. But on seeing them marching with swords drawn, we sallied forth from our fort, forming a squadron on the field; we followed them at a moderate pace – as we were used to winning. But then we marched faster, fearing some barbarian ambush.

The crisis lasted until the sun had reached its zenith. It seemed far from its usual apex, as if it had changed its course – equidistant from East and West. Meanwhile, as it completed its customary circuit and gave way to the nocturnal hours and the lightening of our personal loads, we cleared the clogged ditch around us (without relaxing our vigilance) and built bridges over the parts most severely damaged, diligently repairing the weakest points, making adequate defences and fortifying the site to withstand a major assault.

Black night covered the land which light had deserted; all the men had gathered beneath its shroud, distributing guards and sentries. The limited amount of time available spared nobody. Unlucky me: my duty was to stand guard in a trench joined to the fort. After all the work of that day, not having relaxed for fifteen hours, importunate sleep afflicted me, finding me soft and broken. But I resisted it with a new exercise, going from one side to the other; without stopping for a moment. I could not trust my own feet to carry me. Neither the flood of vaporous substance, nor the wine many times decanted, nor the habit and custom of rest had managed to put me to sleep. A mouldy black sponge cake given by a mean hand, and tasteless rainwater, were my sustenance. Sometimes the ration was changed to two lumps of

barley dough, which was served to us seasoned with herbs, because of the lack of salt (though the water was salty). The free bed on which we slept was the soggy, flooded earth. I was always armed and always in order, now with a pen in my hand, now a spear. So going then with the upsetting sleep, and in the great silence, I performed the task in hand, passing from one side to the other. One side of the recess was clogged with dead bodies which our arquebuses that day had beaten and mown down.

Not long after that my alert eyes and attentive ears sensed noises periodically issuing from the dead bodies, always finishing with a sustained, sad sigh, and returned to feel it seeming to pass from body to body. The night was so gloomy and dark that I could not make anything out. And so to see one end of this adventure (though I need more information to complete the account) there it came to me: as I was camped out on the ground, at the point the noise had come from, I saw a black shape wandering on all fours among the dead. I was disturbed at that sight; I felt terror which I will not deny to this day, sword in hand and shield to breast, calling to God in that terrible place. But the figure then stood erect and in a fearful voice made a humble request:

“I beg your mercy sir, for I am a woman and have never offended you. If my sorrow, my extraordinary distress do not move you to pity and piety, if your bloody sword and wild cruelty go beyond their proper bounds, what glory will you gain from such a deed – when the just heavens proclaim that you used your sword on a woman – a widow, wretched, sad and struck down. Then I implore you, sir, if by chance you have misfortune, as I have. I will love you tenderly, in pure faith, any day. Grant me leave to bury a body which lies in the company of the dead – remember that whoever denies justice approves of evil – and does injustice to himself. You do not want to impede holy work which is always allowed, even in the midst of a barbarous war. Such an obstruction would be blatant tyranny. For the sake of my soul I must go in search of his body, then proceed with rigour and fury; for my grief has driven me to such extremity that I now fear life more than death.

“I know full well how much you can harm me; but it would be no greater than what I have suffered already. So since my dear mate has died, finish what you left off doing. Although the cruel heavens forbid my body to be reunited with his, they cannot stop my afflicted spirit from following him.”

With these words she almost asked me to put her out of her misery. But being in the grip of doubt and confusion and a fear which deceived me, I did not immediately trust her, *suspecting she might be a spy come to gather information about us*. Yet although I had my doubts (and the night covered her face), from her calm and lack of fear, what she said rang true to me: that perfidious love, blind and ungrateful, took her in search of her husband who gave his life in the first attack, wanting to distinguish himself. Then, moved to compassion by seeing her in her chaste and loving intent, having gone forth, I turned and asked her to explain her quarrels and suffering. I assured her that principles finally count, and letting out ones feelings finally relieves them.

She replied: "You get no relief until death. My terrible passion has no remedy, and my suffering is stronger than anything I have ever known. But even though it is something unbearable for me, talking about it gives me a bitter taste; perhaps my pain is so grave that it will finally destroy me. I am Tegualda, hapless daughter of the ill-fated child Brancol – a beautiful woman loved in vain by many, free for a time from love and care – but very soon Fortune, angry with me for my liberty, wrecked my happiness by making him die of an illness which he neither knew nor feared. I had many proposals of marriage, and turned them all down. My good father, upset by my refusal, said that he would accept anyone who asked me. But I, with a free and open mind, refused his request – going along with it would drive me mad, hammer me fruitlessly into cold steel. Those tenacious suitors did not relent in the face of my self-willed, bitter refusals. They persisted in their vain demands with new protestations, dances, games and displays – tried to weaken my firm stand. But no skill or artifice was enough to unhinge me.

"But then there came the last day of my freedom and dominion. Oh that my life were gone! But it could not be, what was truly my birthright; in a place where people assembled, where the clear Gualebo, gentle river, after irrigating the luxuriant fields, took its name and its waters into the broad Itata. There, to punish my deceit, they asked me to attend their parties, and as they had been arranged for my harm, they rapidly finished with me. With extraordinary skill and artifice, they decked the paths in foliage so that the good road appeared bad, and I felt unworthy to be touched by the sun."

"There came through various arches a distinguished company, well-attired and organised in such a way as to enhance the ornaments of nature. The clear water murmured; the trees, moved by the wind, made movements and sound which delighted eye and ear. Scarcely had they put me there when they made a solemn edict which displeased the restive crowd. When each person had retired to his place, the customary contest commenced – in such dead silence that all those present looked more like pictures than people. There were also many bright youths, looking like competitors of different sorts, in assorted outfits, aspiring to distinction. None of them had been conquerors or conquered; they were looking here and there for entertainment, with daring, free thoughts.

"I who in the course of this did not stop desiring the end of the contest, looked up at the high trees, contemplating the works of nature, surveying the water which crossed the field, counting the various pebbles, seemingly secure – free from care, love and misadventure. Then a great clamour (obviously coming from a similar game) arose among that company; this disrupted my calm. Wanting to know what it was, I asked around as to what had occasioned the noise – of which it would have been better for me to know nothing.

"Someone said 'Lady, have you not admired how robust young Mareguano has struggled with so many competitors and has thrown them to the ground on their backs?' And then I vainly hoped that the beautiful grace of your hand and your noble brow was the prize for the

most valiant. That gallant youth, well put together in a red and green outfit was easily placed, bearing the prize which he had won, and the fickle, shallow crowd, delighted by that as if it were a novelty, raised a confused uproar, extolling the young man's strength. And also Mareguano, who tried to turn the struggle, claimed that it was an unfair contest. There had been a misjudgment: the contestants were not matched in strength or skill. The realities of the contest spoke otherwise, but the young man remained adamant in his view.

"The judges, rightly, did not accept the request of either. Nor did they in any way desire innovation in this contest, preferring the two to abandon their contest if both agreed. When first appearing before you, they did not meet with your overt approval. A great crowd of people came pouring into my area. When they reached me, they went silent; the winning man raised his voice in humble courtesy and said 'Lady, I beg one favour of you, though I do not deserve it: if I am a stranger, unworthy of that which it is in your power to grant me, I offer myself to live and die as your humble servant. Although you have not acknowledged the insult I have suffered, I would ask your approval for another contest with Mareguano. And another and more again, until everybody is satisfied. I agree to be put under a handicap at the beginning; with this done in your presence, I hope to emerge from this trial with greater glory. Give us licence to do this: overrule the Statutes with your absolute, limitless power.

"This I say, with humble reverence, in expectation of your reply'. Without caution I looked at him, listening attentively. Not only did I give him licence, I desired him to win, and so I replied: 'If I can do it, I will freely and graciously allow it'. With a gallant demeanour both of them took leave of me; to the people's great delight they entered the closed square. Then their seconds separated them on the field and left them alone in their positions. They moved rapidly against each other. Gripping at one point and struggling, they covered a great distance in the field, now turning and rolling over, now going across, now to the right, jumping up and bowing down, now gathered breast to breast; so tightly did they hold each other that neither of them could draw breath.

"They turned to wrestle (a very strange sight), making a noise bizarre to the ears. But the young foreigner, already handicapped by lack of strength and skill, jumped up from the ground, at his opponent, and with a whimper, flexing his shoulders, threw Mareguano to the ground with such force that he felt he had no bone left intact. Then, accompanied by a big crowd, the adjudicators escorted them to my throne, where they knelt at my feet, saying that I should award the prize. I do not know whether it was his star, my destiny or the causes for which they struggled, but I started trembling; a raging fire surged through my bones. I found myself so confused and changed by this new occurrence that for a while I was stunned, and panicked in the midst of the crowd and all this danger. But at that moment I lowered my eyes, cast down by honest shame, and the young man, with a generous gesture, opened my ears to his reasons. Finally, he radiated happiness and left me feeling disturbed. Then it came to love and grief combined, from the first step to the final point.

"I felt compelled by a sense of novelty, a free strength and rebellious verve – to which reason, liberty and willpower submitted. I, when in accord, found my cold breast burning and

raised my timid, swollen eyes which shame had held down. With the halts of shame and restraint broken, I followed him with eyes of desire, the sore and venom swelling even more. To look only at him was not good for me; I loved it as he passed before me; the very sight of him elevated my soul. I saw at that time that he was preparing to run to the customary canopy, which was a mile or more away. At the end of this furious course, there was promised to the lithe winner a well-burnished ring, and a huge emerald, finely cut, given by this my wretched hand.

“More than forty young men came forward to contest for the prize; they all put themselves in a line, all promptly at the ready; as soon as they heard the signal, they shot off at such great speed that they hardly left any marks on the grass and plants in the arena. But Crepino, the young foreigner who called himself by his own name, rushed to the front with such fury that the fast wind lagged behind him. The first one to complete the long run finally touched the red canopy, and he was applauded by the enthusiastic crowd. Surrounding the full broad plaza, in solemn triumph, they carried him off. But then, turning in my direction, they asked me to give him the ring. Feigning a trembling fear (keenly observed by the crowd), having passed the point of indignation and fear, I gave him my ring and my liberty.

“He said to me: ‘Lady, I beg you to accept this gift from me; although it seems poor and small, I assure you that the devotion with which it is offered is great. By bestowing this favour I will remain rich. My soul and strength will be enhanced – and no mighty enterprise will be too difficult for me’.

“I, in the spirit of courtesy (that quality which is perfected by women) told him that I would receive the ring and the good will of such a person. In the midst of all that company, I made a turn of my heavy crown, descended from my pleasant seat and proceeded to my father’s house. With no feeble resistance, for the sake of the people, I covered up my grief, the pain and ardent fire ever growing. Making a show of obedience to my father, I skilfully used signs and decoys to give him the impression and that I wanted to comply with his request – saying that he had persuaded me to take a marriage partner, and that I had chosen to obey him. The intended was Crepino, who had courage, good fortune and recognised lineage – together with being of an honest, affable and laudable disposition. My father, with a stern and solemn gesture, listened out my words and then, kissing me on the forehead, said “in this and everything, I respect your free will, since with your discretion and honest intent you will choose what is right, and show that Crepino, in his breeding, is worthy of respect and optimism. Since my humour and desire are satisfied, and the vain struggles and foundations of those young men resolved, the tragic wedding was announced. I only had one month’s grace. *Oh hard fate, where disaster is so near to happiness!*

“Hitherto I had lived contented with my lot, without fear of probing or mistrust. Now bloody, savage death has dashed everything to the ground. What is your advice in such dire straits? What recompense can heaven give me, when no remedy works, when there is no good to match this great evil? That, then, is the process; that is the story of the certain end of my sweet light; here my liberty and brief glory are transformed into eternal bitterness. And since

my wounding memory has got more painful because of you, I beg you to relieve my agony, and leave me to bury my husband. It is not good that birds of prey tear the wretched body to pieces, nor that the brutal wild beasts sate their insatiable stomachs. But if you refuse to do such a just and reasonable thing let us both, with this sword and hard hands, go to death and the sepulchre!”

* * *

There she ended her story, and started a plaint which felt eternal – with an angst and agony that riveted me to her grief. It was not enough to assure her that I could promise all this; she only asked for death and sacrifice as the ultimate remedy and blessing. Don Simon Pereira who was standing guard on the other side, saw me in great grief and confusion; he did not come to tell me that the time was up. Frightened by what he had heard, he helped me to console her, reinforcing my offers. The fast-moving sky pulled the stars into the sea; the Southern Cross, signalling the hours, went down between the South and the South West. In the midst of the nocturnal silence. Seeing how much our offer pleased Tegualda, assuaging her lament, we took her to our lodgings. There we left her honestly guarded by married women, as the expected day cast off night’s bleak mantle.

Meanwhile, since everyone is getting tired of me going on, I too must take a break, and leave the next instalment until tomorrow.

Canto XXI

(Tegualda finds her husband's body which she buries to the accompaniment of an elegy. The Spaniards and their horses reach Penco overland from Santiago. Caupolicán is made leader of his people.)

What could be more conclusive proof of the power of love? Who ever showed such devotion as we have seen from this beautiful, but so tragic barbarian woman? Her fame elevates my humble voice as I extol her; in proclaiming her boldly and sonorously, it crosses language barriers and bonds all nations. Let there cease the utterances of mordant, venomous tongues accustomed to offending virtuous women. Then look carefully and see that this is the only indication. For want of evidence to the contrary, their malice confuses them and condemns them to a hard leash and shameful punishment.

How many have we seen who scaled the daunting heights of fame? Think of Camilla, the prodigy Dido (unjustly defamed by Virgil), Penelope and Lucretia – whose husband drenched the violated being in blood; Hippo, Tucia, Virginia, Fulnia, Cloelia, Porcia, Sulpicia, Alcestes and Cornelia. One could easily place beautiful Tegualda among them, since she did this singular exploit to show her true devotion. Elevated by her deeds, she shines forth among the most illustrious; her name will always be celebrated – immortal and consecrated.

Then, when she was taken to a safe house, in safe company and grateful for small blessings (in terms of her expectations for the future). But with the new light of dawn, although delightful sleep had clinched my tired limbs with gentleness, I awoke as the cared-for sufferer. Coming from where she was, persistent in her lament, she could only briefly let up. I consoled her with great compassion, making a firm offer to hand over her husband and give him to people with whom he could freely leave. She burst into tears, incredulous about this blessing, and stretched out her arms asking for security. So calling on the Indians she went out, searching high and low. Finally, among the dead sprawled out there, we found his frozen, bleeding body, pierced by a musket ball. Wretched Tegualda, who saw in front of her – in a flash, that wretched, disfigured face, threw herself on him, and bathed in an abundant floor of tears, kissed his mouth and the wound, to see if she could bring him back to life.

“Oh my sad fate!” she cried, “that I have come to such grief. Why can't I satisfy my just love at this perfect moment? Why was I faint-hearted, when I could have got out of this pain in a flash? The injustice lies in denying me death!”

After I had calmed her down, with my pleas and persuasion, when her promises had assured me of her gentle intent – and her delirium, the sturdy porters lifted the cold body onto a plank and bore it on their broad shoulders to where their servants guarded it. *Because this happened in the middle of a war, it did not feel like an insult or an excess. Passing a near by sierra, I took it into the company of my people. But once it was on the right path, and reached safe*

territory, the recognition of the benefit and work it had received was no longer my main focus of attention.

Having returned to that site we worked solidly for a week, rebuilding what had been demolished, repairing the ditch and the broken wall. Through sustained effort we finally raised our spirits and achieved good order, keeping a constant watch on the enemy's movements, so that everything was known to us. We also got news that our soldiers had set off from Mapocho, well supplied with arms and ammunition, 1,000 horses and 2,000 archers. But the torrents, swamps and marshes, swollen by the rainy water, bogged the force down and took livestock, clothing and people in their tide.

One Indian reached our fort in high dudgeon, saying "Oh reckless, crazy people, beware: you are near to death! The boundless power of the Araucanians will be unleashed upon you; no walls, no barricades will save you; you will have no place of refuge." At midday a friendly chief from the mountains brought the same advice – that all the strength and power of the land was coming, superbly equipped with all the panoply of war – pontoon bridges, planks, logs and a mass of siege equipment. Our people were not dismayed at this news, before reaching the desired point where even the least spirited tried the riskiest places with admirable speed and efficiency. We hoped that a show of feverish activity would make some impression, act as a deterrent to the foe.

Our Indian spies advised us that the assault would certainly be made on three sides in the latter part of the dark night, and that as their suspicions grew, they would not conclude that we had more men, nor that our forces would appear on a mountain top in good order. Who could depict the happiness, the merriment of one side and the other: the great display and movement, the raw striving of furious Mars, so many banners waving in the wind, so many pennons, emblems and standards, trumpets, clarinets, voices, names, neighing and snorting of horses? We spoke of the ones and the others with tales of love and fulfilment, and found a suitable place for the horses; we erected wooden platforms, awnings and bell tents in such numbers that it seemed as if a city had been founded.

Because of this occurrence the nearby barbarian army prudently changed its strategy; Colocolo wisely opposed the opinion of many, using persuasive arguments which swung the majority to his view.

And so, as I said, there was a great dispute; but they finally deferred the execution of their drastic plan, staying in the dusty field until they had more certain intelligence about the Spanish army which had already arrived – rumoured to be in large numbers.

But our men were aching to prove they meant business. Enemies of idleness, they ached to devastate enemy territory, tried with seething passion to accelerate the war, making diligent efforts and insistent requests for the vital preparations.

Having briefly reorganised the baggage after that long, unpleasant day, those brave, warlike

people, eager for honour and impelled by valour, murmured that the expedition should be speeded up: they should do in one day what had scheduled for five.

The bright dawn, long awaited, at last arrived; there arrived a large company of cavalry and infantry, who on this occasion had set off by land (although it was beset by rebellion) – with a great baggage-train, well-supplied with arms, munitions and provisions. Gathered on that site were so many soldiers, so much equipment. All the necessary provisions were made; the barracks and quarters were evenly distributed so each man would rally to the flag when the alarm was sounded.

On the other side Caupolicán, with no less care and providence, distributed his forces to make effective units, concentrating on those with combat experience, and having put them in their positions, wanted to inspect the men and the equipment that he had at his disposal. The first to set an example was Chief Pillilco, well armed, with a steel-barred stick in his right hand. At the front of his squadron were the dart-throwers, ace marksmen, proceeding in good order – thirteen in a line.

After the last of these came the mighty Leucoton, followed by a dense band of archers firing masses of shots – then Rengo, with his mace bearers, proceeding with a heavy, measured tread, proud, bold, robust, with a heavy log in his hand. After him came rugged Tulcomara who instead of armour wore the skin of a jaguar he had killed, whose frightening face matched his own, showing two thick rows of teeth, white and sharp, smooth and shiny. Accompanying him in a tightly packed throng were his wild people, tough warriors, also dressed in animal skins. There followed the warriors under the command of boastful young Caniotaro; these made more noise than real effort. Following him was the least line, Millalermo, a strapping young man, with his painted weapons – descendant of the famous Picoldo, ruler of the inhabitants of the valley of the great Nibequeten, whose current did not cease flowing until it reached the Biobio.

Next passed the figure of Mareande, with a scimitar and a broad shield – a man of great pride and presumption, tall and brawny; with him, his cousin Lepomande, naked, a great sharp knife at his shoulder, both with one intent – surrounded by chattering soldiers. After him, in line, heading his squadron, was Lemolemo, dragging a heavy pike, extremely bright, standing out from the others. A little behind was Gualemo, covered in the hard furry skin of a seal which his father had killed in defence of his mother.

According to the legend (I do not know if it was true) she was bathing in the sea, quite far out; a seal came and seized her. Her husband, hearing the cries of his dear woman, seeing her in the seal's clutches, in terror of losing her, threw himself in the water to rescue her. So strong was the daring man's impulse, that he went for the seal and dragged it to the shore, where the marine monster submerged (it too was blinded by love), and was borne off on the fleeing waves of ebb tide. Shaking its hard neck, it released its prize – then, twisting its great body, turned itself against the spirited young man who, not missing the opportunity, seized

his nearby weapons: the two began a battle which calmed the sea and made the sun stop to admire it.

Through a combination of skill and strength, the brave barbarian wounded the predatory monster in the brow with a wrought-iron baton, then finished the job, leaving the great seal, measuring over 30 feet, stretched out on the shore.

In memory of this heroic feat, worthy to go down in history, he made, from the beast's thick, furry pelt a strong suit of armour. When Guacol died, brave Gualemo inherited his weapons, and went to Quilacura – an extensive, populous valley, rich in gold and livestock.

There followed Talcaguano, whose territory reached the sea and surrounded it. He held in his right hand a thick pole, covered in plumage, which he twirled and brandished like a light cane. The ranks followed him, their chests criss-crossed with red, white and blue bands. Then there was Tome, and following in his footsteps the Puelches, with their big, muscular arms, wearing their banderillas, carrying spears swords and clubs. They were fickle, ineffectual, unreliable – making a lot of noise with little substance. Also present was Andalican, with his bright, experienced warriors, dressed in fine tabards, bearing their big, well-burnished lances – and Orompello, not yet of mature years, but striking-looking person, inspiring hope; he commanded another squadron, adjoining Ongolmo's men on the right.

Then Elicura passed them, well-armed, followed by a band of eager youngsters, of great presumption and gallantry. Then the Llaucos, with their faces painted in red ochre – a robust company, having as their leader the successor of illustrious Ainavillo. Then Cayocupil, at the ready, full of enthusiasm, leading his group with heavy steps, followed by a bright baggage train – men no less experienced and hip-swinging, hardened fighters to boot. Followed by Lincoya, almost a giant, his crested helmet raised above the others, wearing a gleaming breastplate – with an arrogant air, at the head of his tightly packed squadron. Then young Peycavi proceeded with his brave troop. Afterwards, there came to this group, in good order, stern Caniomangue, saddened by the death of his father, whose responsibilities he had inherited; his white armour covered in black, and his squadron attired in that colour; they marched slowly to the discordant beat of drums. At the very end was gallant Tucapel, covered in shining armour, with broad squares of gold and dark grey; big of body and stern looking, with robust, heavy footsteps – at the head of a troop of brave, arrogant men.

With the rest of the Araucanian army, more ablaze than irate Mars, the great Caupolicán strode on, carrying a short stick; under his shade and flag were the heroic Curgo and Mareguan, the grave and eloquent Colocolo, Millo, Teguan, Lambecho and Guampicolo – and their entourage – a confused mass of warriors – locals, friendlies and foreigners. As the waves swell on the sea, so the fierce army grew; the earth shook and trembled beneath them, pummelled by so many feet. The air was thick with their din and with great clouds of dust, which went in broad eddies to the sky – like a thick fog or a dark cloud.

* * *

Meanwhile, our camp was in similar order; according to reports I received, Don Garcia, at the time of departure, was at the head of this valiant company, in good spirits and of good appearance, which promised success – moving the eager hearts, he spoke thus:

“Brave gentlemen, whose natural courage led you to discover the wild southern regions, passing through the torrid zone and the distant tropics, which Apollo could never do (though he is nearer to the heavens and the stars) – nor would the Sovereign Lord allow it. And you have persevered with such an effort, until the Catholic banners fly here, and innumerable foreign people are submitted to Spanish dominion; with strong hearts and souls will give you the edge against these barbarians. Having defeated them, all the world will be at your feet. And as much as we have prolonged this action, and brought the campaign to its conclusion, we have done little or nothing which has not enhanced your honour; but if the issue is undecided, the wild enemy has equal rights in the campaign; they could prevail against all your glory and fortune in one action. What I have to say, for my part, is that in these battles and rebellions, although the enemy has attacked you, you never turn your backs on them, before defending them, as with a friend – if turning loose arms on you, avoiding dying in battle, since it is better to spare lives than to destroy them.

“Look at everything in the light of reason – for whom you have always taken up arms; when it goes beyond proper bounds, fury loses its true strength and right is violated. When reason does not restrain and guide the excessive impetus, the savagery of the punitive measures justifies the enemy’s cause. I do not know, I cannot say any more, nor warn you any more that I am disturbed by the fury in your hearts. Now; pull down the palisades and pavilions; let us move as one when Fortune calls us.”

Promptly the squadrons, with great boasting and verve marched to the sandy banks of the broad and abundant Biobio; embarking into spacious boats they crossed the wide river and entered the forbidden district with a fully-formed army.

Inevitably, I have to pass over some details, I must take a break and recover my breath, as my tired voice is beginning to fail me, and I feel the torrent overwhelming me. But I will make another effort, which you can read about in the next canto.

Canto XXII

(The Spaniards enter the state of Arauco. The Araucanians do battle with them at a disadvantage. Rengo makes great proof of his worth. In the name of so-called justice the Spaniards cut off the hands of Gualarino, a brave Indian.)

Perfidious, tyrannical love: what profit can you gain from my malaise? Are you so dissatisfied with my promise that you wish to afflict me further? In my cautious breast, I felt working up, little by little, a living flame which then gently penetrated my veins and bones. You are such a traitor, making me deviate from the hard style of sanguinary Mars – your importunity exhausts me utterly.

Leave me now; it should not be said that because no-one wants to celebrate you, you are going to search for me in the ultimate corner and there exert your strength to afflict me. Having so many admirers, can't you see that it degrades you to pursue of me, especially when I am in the midst of such chaos? How could you be so lacking in reason, and in the midst of weapons and a thousand combats, arouse me from my sleep – perhaps in vain, as grief is everywhere. I now admit that the horrendous trumpets of the nearby enemy blocks off my ears against anything else which touched me on the road, where I felt a struggle developing that would not allow any unoccupied space even to the most fertile imagination.

What can I do if I see myself being put in the field before fulfilling my promise and someone throws the object of my desire elsewhere? But now I am reduced to taking the shortest path without detour, I shall continue the story I started – shorn of ornament and artifice.

* * *

Returning to the main narrative, I will say that our well-ordered unit marched on – rapidly covering a great distance, to the end of the Talcaguano territory and the river. But as the sun was waning we made our first camp, near the water on a suitable piece of flat land at the foot of a hillside. We were scarcely set up in on this spacious river bank when we heard cries from all sides: “To arms! To horse! It's the Indians!” Then we rushed here and there, disciplined and in good order, rallying round our flags and banners, forming lines and squadrons. Our reconnaissance party crossed the broad plain, to find the foothills of the Andalican mountain. To their left they saw a band of warriors, closing ranks and crying:

“You just try us; today we'll see who's got the real guts!”

With strong hearts our men formed a squadron in the shelter of an incline, awaiting the superior enemy forces. But we had no breathing space; the wild barbarians charged on us, forcing us to flee in chaos, all our reins let loose. Although they were divided into small units they rallied – and with great courage the conquered attacked the proud conqueror. But in face of the latter's fury they went back the way they came, leaving behind some of their rebellious foes – dead or wounded. With mounting fury the confident Indians pressed home their assault; surrounded by a thick cloud of dust they chased our men. With loose reins, with more

fear than caution, we spurred on the stampeding horses. But however much we goaded our steeds with voices, bodies, arms and heels – the barbarians, on foot, caught up with them, forcing our riders to dismount. At last, finally cornered, they fought like wounded lions and bears who see their lairs and tracks swarming with wretched greyhounds.

Just as the furious wind sweeps across fields and paths with indomitable violence, raising a gloomy cloud of dust and rapidly turning a vast area of land into an eddy, fans out, uprooting the deeply embedded tree trunks – with just such facility, seized by that violent barbarian fury, the exhausted Spaniards sallied forth without being able to put up any real fight. Some turned, feeling their honour was outraged – but another enemy wave cornered them off, at great speed, inflicting heavy damage. They went on mistreating them, following their destiny and happy fortune, having ruthlessly wrought their surging fury on the humble. Resonating through the broad valley, the rattling and piercing barbarian yells, snatched by the light wind, were borne to our position.

On the Western side, with great speed and no less noise Juan Ramon rushed in with a large band. As soon as they arrived, they raised a ferocious yell and gallantly charged at the enemy – who were already bloated with victory and blood. But they were stopped by a sturdy wall and a balustrade with strong points, which made a resounding, beautiful impact with the ruin of one side or the other. Some went from side to side, some fled; some were wounded, some crippled, others trampled beneath the horses' hooves.

Oh my pen! It would be wrong to gloss over those memorable events and the crude effects of bold swords and lances on that day. Although a far greater talent than mine could not do them full justice, it is right to celebrate them to some degree, with whatever means are at one's disposal.

Gallant Lincoya arrogantly guided the first squadron – ferocious, angry men; making huge strides, he flexed his thick pike, and clinching the story, on the ground, at his feet, he struck down the hardy Hernan Perez; the hard steel slashed his right side; its sharp edged dealt a deep wound, piercing his double-quilted jerkin and a close-knit coat of mail. The broad, hard, bloodstained steel opened the way for the ropes, leaving the body, already limp, hanging from the tree trunk.

On his way Tucapel met Osorio, who came running with more spirit than sense, shaking his steely claws at the right moment and twirling his mace: he used it with such force that not a limb or bone of his adversary's body was left intact. Cacera quickly followed suit, also to be knocked down. Tucapel seized his sword and shield to continue the fight single-handed, showing such a formidable front as to strike fear into the hearts even of the most intrepid. But although he sustained a stupendous effort, his strength could not prevail against so many; a dense throng surrounded him with a mountain of confusion.

But in the nick of time a detachment of over fifty horse, commanded by Rincon, broke that impasse. So strongly, so fiercely did they charge that, although they met a woven wall of

stout poles, they broke the tight squadron, more than ten holding the hard ground, they charged brave Caceres who, surrounded and desperate, sustaining himself with his furious stole, and had a protracted death, killing as he headed for mortality. Don Miguel and Don Pero de Auandano, Escobert, Juan Life, Cortes and Aranda, looking at the extraordinary risk and peril, held the band together. So did Losada, Pena, Cordoba and Miranda, Bernal Lasarte. Castaneda, Ulloa, Martin Ruiz and Juan Lopez de Gamboa – to great effect, inflicting heavy casualties.

But the Araucanians, already bloated with Spanish blood, forced them back the way they came; after them another squadron suddenly, foolishly burst in; as they did not gain an inch it was prudent for them to turn back. Sometimes Juan Remon and the others turned round with a sudden swing then, with more losses but extra energy, they rallied from their first setback and surged ahead in a thick cloud of dust. They discovered our camp, well organised and in full battle order.

They thrust themselves in front of our pikes, which countered their loose steps and their fury. Cool and collected, they reassembled across the field at the foot of a hill, near a lake and a big marsh. Then we attacked them from our corner, a big force of foot soldiers reaching them with speed. We delivered a heavy attack and a shower of missiles. As they retreated towards the marsh, we pursued them, fleet of foot – for hand-to-hand fighting, making a bold show of our strength and anger.

Never did the Germans fight so firmly, face to face, hand to hand, taking blows, relentlessly sustaining their thrust, as did the two sides locked together in this mire, who could not draw back one step, each side giving as good as it got. Waist deep in the marsh, some struggled – one against two or three. Some simply got bogged down as they tried to move forward, testing their luck and strength, clinching with the enemy, swamped and blinded by the mud as they struggled to prevail.

The fury of the wounds and blows went equally and the outcome was in doubt. Fortune did not declare its direction; there was minimal advantage on either side. Some seemed to rally, some got as far as the lagoon. The blood shed by all the casualties coloured the turbulent waters.

When he spotted our camp and saw he was heading for certain death, Rengo – whom hatred and flaming rage had carried on blind for so long – retired to the nearby marsh. With proud face and pulsating breast he turned to face our army, saying in a menacing voice: “Come on, you scum! Let your cruelty be focused on me – I’ll be your quarry, as I desire your deaths more than my own life. I shall not rest until I see the Spanish nation destroyed, sate my hunger and slake my rabid thirst with your flesh and blood.”

Threatening heaven and earth, he presented himself in the middle of the swamp, brandishing his bloody mace and terrifying the faint-hearted. Not recognising his voice but hearing his ferocious words, those of us Spaniards nearest to him rushed to the attack. But with one blow,

Rengo pounded to pulp the head of Juan, a friendly Indian who had gone ahead of the fearless band; with another, he broke the body of Chilca; with brutal fury he dealt a third one at young Zuniga, and thrust him chest-deep into the mire. A thick storm of blows, shaking the clear air, rained on his passionate breast from all sides. This did not stop the wild barbarian; waist-deep in the mud, at the head of his people, he redoubled his blows.

Just as a quarry wounded by a thick javelin, struggling through a more pursued by ferocious bloodhounds, raging, growling, snorting as they turn hither and thither, faces, breaks, outrages, wounds and kills, so the brave barbarian, in insane fury, covered in sweat, blood and mud, stood alone in the midst of the marsh, resisting the fury of the blows which rained on him from all sides, covering the ground, numberless, they fired at him and stormed over him like a tempest.

The obedient, scattered Araucanian army which had gone on advancing, withdrew and regrouped when it discovered our people on the plain. Only Rengo, fierce and dauntless, sustained the unequal struggle because the marsh was deep and thickly overgrown. Seeing the dubious outcome of the action and the certain casualties considering the numbers of the force surrounding his men, he saved his soldiers and himself by beating a timely retreat via a wild, hidden path through the craggy mountains.

“Friends!” he said, “there’s no point in wasting our strength on futile action; let’s save our remaining blood to sell it later for a better price! Let us withdraw from this marshland before we get bogged down, pinned down by the enemy, and our morale gets shattered.”

Following Rengo’s instruction they held back from using their weapons and to the sound of the drum retreated to the narrowest, most overgrown part. It was rough country and their path was hard going. Our men could not follow them there; the attempt left some of them so exhausted that others had to go their assistance.

The barbarians climbed the rearing side of the mountain; Rengo, brutal, blood-drenched and mud-spattered, organised them as a rearguard on the rutted tracks, followed by the tardy cattle, with their high brows and hard necks. We organised our position. The enemy had made a complete withdrawal. From them we took one prisoner who was sent to detention in my section. An order was given for his hands to be cut off; his punishment was meant to set an example for the local rebels.

There on a hewn-down branch, they put his right hand, and cut it off with a savage blow; then they did the same with the left, so sharply that the branch split. But his brow was not twisted or furrowed. With disdain and contempt he raised his head and craned his neck, saying “Cut this throat which has always thirsted for your blood. I do not fear death; I am not intimidated by your brutal, menacing gesture: it is no more important than the loss of my hands. There are many other tasks that swords can perform. If you think you have anything to gain from taking my life, despatch it now. If you want me to live, I don’t – I will be so happy, so

satisfied to die at your hands. I want to shame and outrage you with the example of my death.”

So, dogged and stubborn, he defied both death and his injuries; ever more rabid and tenacious he threw himself over the blood-drenched ground where, wallowing in his own gore, he wanted to end his own life, biting those blood-drained torsos with his teeth.

Being tenacious, tempering his anger with pity, I saw a barbarian coming down the hillside, bearing a wounded man. Like a ferocious beast focusing on his prey I struck in fury and stopped him in his tracks. With feet and arms exposed, he stretched out the body on the ground, and with his hard, blood-drained stumps beat him on the nose and eyes, finally joined to ours – in mouthfuls, without being able to value what he was eating. If he were not given first aid, he would remain badly wounded, even though he kept his speed.

That infernal barbarian, standing on his feet, spoke in a brave voice: “Since I still have some blood and strength with which to have a go at the Christians, I want to devote the rest of my life to this. Although fate only allows me to do so in a vile way – with no hands! I hope to gain my revenge. Even when I lack them, I can still wreak my vengeance.

“Go, go, cursed ones. I tell you, you who lay me low with hatred and rabid thirst. Oh torturing enemies: you will soon learn how I pursue you; my death shall be a warning to you.” (He said other things which I could not note down, then departed as lightly as the wind.)

It is not good that we conclude without giving the name of this gallant barbarian who, because of his vigour and courage was called Galbarino. *But now I am weak, mute and breathless; my strength and voice are exhausted by all those gruesome details I have recounted.*

Canto XXIII

(Gualarino comes to a meeting of the Araucanian Senate. He makes a speech to the Council which demolishes the opinions of some of those present. The Spaniards go in search of the enemy. This canto also describes the hideout of sorcerer Fiton and what goes on there.)

Sir, I can never belittle the resilience of our enemy. As we know that a Spaniard can kindle a fire in which he himself gets burned, it is prudent to be circumspect when we find ourselves in a happy state. Those who have a bonanza of prosperity are prone to apathy. Only a happy death assures the brief course of benign destiny. While uncertain life endures, nothing ever remains in a fixed state. Only a person who has never taken a risk can call himself blessed, and live contented – without the extremes of prosperity or tragedy. And since we know for sure that there has never been rest or security, and that well-established laws, ordinances do not lead to happiness, wasting time on them will only lead to grief. So in order to avoid being long-winded and irritating, I will tell you about the humiliation of young Gualalarino.

Though wounded and drained of blood he reached Andalican, where Caupolicán's army was assembled. This was when the illustrious Senate met in secret to discuss military and general affairs, giving and taking opinions on these matters. Through a just fear, the debate put brakes on the importunate ideals of some who made some difficult things sound easy to show their courage. Some approved the proposals, others protested strongly against them.

Gualalarino arrived in the midst of this confusion, barely alive. He begged for permission to take part in the proceedings; this was graciously given. With due reverence, though suffering from loss of blood, in which he was drenched, he raised his enfeebled voice:

“Great men: if you are accustomed to taking vengeance, seeing the great wrongs committed by the foreigners, and to your banners casting their shadows over foreign lands and nations – how come some foreign bastards oppress and conquer you? How come you are so half-hearted about retaliation? I am one of you; look at my mutilated body. To add insult to injury, they sent me, lacerated by wounds, to the Senate – to tell you what had happened. See how your honour has been violated, how the tyrant shows himself to you, through me, as a warning that all chiefs will be dismembered. Certainly, your heroes have gained their honour and glory in vain, and the reputation of Arauca, which once ascended to the heavens in its secure virtue, is now infamous, downtrodden, battered. Its tongue now licks the earth, and your illustrious blood is chilled, poured into dirty corners.

“What province was there that did not once tremble at the sound of your voice, nor nation which did not go to arms, impelled by fear and courage alike, reaching the top because so many of your men had fallen there, finally earning contempt when they paid the debts of the past? Some hostile foreigners, in the name of clemency, offer purported friendship – as a ploy to reduce you to submission – then, if you do not submit, they threaten to castigate your

‘insolence’ with savage reprisals – with no one spared from the knife – regardless of race, creed or status.

“Turn to yourselves: lend no ear to their wiles and subterfuge, since all strive to rob your heroic achievements of their lustre. *What has brought them here from distant parts and seas is lust for the gold which lies in the rich veins of this land. Their supposed motive is ‘pure idealism’ to extend the Christian religion. This claim is a fabrication, spawned by greed!* We see through their lies: they are adulterers, thieves and thugs.

“When, in the future, we are menaced by hard, dark destiny, we can opt for an honourable death – a fast, easy, safe remedy. Let a strong man put on a tough front against bitter adversity, so that a firm heart and an invincible soul can surmount the impossible.”

He could not go on, for he fell unconscious from loss of blood. His weary neck, already exhausted, could hold up his head no more; his disfigured mortal form was stretched out on the bloodstained earth, making even the hardest heartstake pity on him for his impending death. But he was not mortally wounded; his precarious life was saved when the flow of blood was staunched, and he was comforted by remedies applied in the nick of time. Then the young man could pull himself together and recover his primary sanity.

So strong were his arguments, so powerful the hatred of the Spaniards which they engendered, that even the faintest hearts were aroused to fury – in this way all differences of opinion melted into a consensus and all thoughts of half-measures were expunged.

The restless young men, desperate to take up arms, ached to speed things up. But the more mature, the slower-paced, tempered that adult anger – indiscreetly (in the eyes of some) deviating from the general decree.

Let us leave them then, planning to make not one battle, but a hundred – to order the how, when and where: a mass of discussions but with one single aim in view. I see myself slipping little by little from our agitated lodging, where we were all gathered, well-prepared and guarded.

When the longed-for sun rose the cavalry set forth in battle order, leaving the infantry behind them and the camp followers at the very end; they proceeded with such speed that at midday we ascended the dreaded, bitter slope, full of bleached Christian bones which aroused our fears and gave us pain. Then we went down to the valley of Arauco where the sea beat on its western bank. On a plain there, we set up camp, well provided with provisions. From that centre we sent expeditions to impose a secure peace and Christian law upon the area.

But they did not return at the expected time; several days passed without our spies, for all their skill, getting a full picture. It was agreed that there should be an expedition to the nearby villages and farmsteads, by the late rising of the new moon, to make a full survey. So in the midst of the silence and the dark night, I suddenly perceived some densely-populated villages

where those hapless people lived, secure in their poverty – as the upheaval of war had not driven them from their land.

Coming to Chayllacano, which is where our camp was set up I saw, walking on a hill, on the edge of the plain, by a narrow path, an Indian – weak, weary, and so old that his feet could hardly carry him – bent double, slow, shrivelled looking as if he were made of tree roots. Shocked by that example of crippled old age I came to his aid as his pace slackened, and asked him if he knew anything. *Never did the fearful quarry, sensing the greyhounds in pursuit, move with such speed as did that old man running down the slope.* Without further ado I took to horse and went in pursuit, thinking I would catch up with him, though he was in flight. But the old man, leaving the wind behind, left me dragging weight, losing sight of him in an instant, without being able to follow him any further.

I found myself at the bottom of a slope near two disused tracks where Rauco ran – flanked by hills on either side. And looking down to my right at a copse of pruned trees, I saw a gentle stream flowing into the river, tasting the grass, the dew and the rain. Then I recalled that in my dreams, reason had told me that I would one day bump into a rock in the river. And so, with the greatest happiness I found a path, which led me here. It could then be that in the ravines the current was very loud. With careless steps and ears I freely trod on the soft grass. But when I sensed my footsteps there, and turned my arrogant face to the noise, I left the lush pasture and woodland for a rough, narrow path, spurring on my horse to go along this at full speed. But then, taking another path which crossed it, I entered some craggy hills. Finally the terrain flattened out into thick woodland, abounding in thickets, bushes and trees. I found a way through the wood and started crossing it. I lost my way, and my passage was blocked. A gale arose. At a loss for my bearings I cautiously inched from one thicket to another. Realising my clumsiness and stupidity, I regretfully turned from my primary intent without moving forwards, without finding track or trace to guide me.

For a long time I floundered, unable to find the hidden exit. Then, to my left could be heard the murmur of a nearby stream. I headed for the source of the noise, and found the stream, at the foot of an oak tree. There I could see a wretched little hut and an old man chained to it. He said to me: “What fate, what misadventure made you stray so far from your path, to this wilderness where no-one has ever been? Nobody knows if, by mischance and dire destiny, you have been outlawed by your countrymen. But here, with my aid, you can find a remedy, and escape.”

In view of such a welcoming offer from this lovely old man, I was happier than I had ever been to find such assistance and equipment. I told him the reason for my arrival, asking if he could give me any directions to the cave where lived Fiton, the magician, for whom I was searching. With a sigh and tender sentiment, the venerable old man took me by the hand, leaving his fragile dwelling in order to be at the entrance to the summer? We looked for a new place in the shadows, near a rough and stony stream, where he spoke to me thus:

“My home is in Arauco, and I am called wretched old Guaticolo, who in his younger years was a soldier – a predecessor of Colocolo; long ago I conquered seven tracts of territory, and my aged brow was crowned a thousand times with bright leaves. But as good things do not last in this life, and all is erratic, my good fortune changed into misadventure and my honour into perpetual disgrace. Through ill fortune and hard fate, I lost the glory acquired over so many years in a contest with Ainavillo, abandoning honour but not life. Now you see me, alive but devoid of dignity. A thousand times before, I wanted to be dead to escape from this home. I came to this wilderness, where I have lived for more than twenty years without being discovered by anyone – apart from yourself, whose arrival, to me seems nothing short of miraculous. I have lived for so long in this solitary state, but now Fortune has borne you to my sad and humble abode. I will happily give you what you asked – I know Fiton who, although difficult and intransigent, is my uncle, brother of Guarcolo, my father.

“He had his dwelling at the foot of a rugged mountain, rarely trodden by human feet, leading his strange life in a hidden, gloomy hovel on which the sun never shone. And he got used to his condition – remote, inhuman, a mortal enemy of human contact. But his wisdom and his power over stones, plants and animals is such that through his science he can plumb the causes of all natural phenomena, and in the dark kingdom of terror compel the silent fiends to tell us in bitter tones of the past, present and future.

“In the fury of the sun and the serene light of the shadows of night covering the ground, without a breath of winds – rains and thunder, the peaceful sky far from the scene, stems the rapid course of the river, and the birds, in mid-flight, are stunned, forced by his strong words. The grasses turn green again and recover their life. The sea returns; the wind obeys it, going against the might and order of the moon. The firm earth trembles and shakes at the sound of his voice, strongly pressing at its centre with no internal power to move or change. The other powerful elements are subject to his words, and he renders ineffectual their ascendancy and their movements. Finally, through his knowledge and magic spells, he understands the secrets, and intuitively the destinies and fates of mankind. It is impossible to overstate the power of this magical fortune teller.

“I only want to offer you, in your official capacity, what my nephew could offer you. But in order to assure this, it will be good for us to take to the road; since it is a quiet time, we can make better progress.”

Then we set off; tugging our horses' reins we travelled at a brisk canter along a narrow, winding path; following this for some distance we reached a forbidding wood, where the rays of the sun and the light of the sky never reached the shadowy ground. Below a rock which had been dug under and covered in branches and trees, we saw a narrow path leading to a small door, standing ajar and decked with heads of animals; there the sturdy old man took me by the hand. We went 100 paces along it, with no fear on my part. Then we emerged into a great vault with an eternal light burning in its midst. In each of its corners we noticed there were neatly arranged stone benches, loaded with a mass of bottles, fully labelled, containing ointments, herbs and curative waters. The penetrating eyes of a lynx, extracted at a special

time, and the venomous ones of the basilisk; the blood of enraged men foaming like wild dogs rabidly fleeing from the water, and the skin of a freckle faced toad when it grows old. There also appeared traces of the hard hyena, and of the Cencris wild cattle, which cried out in the middle of the Libyan desert, a piece of a harpy's wing, the bile of a bivalve mollusc, and the tail of an asp, returned from death into a street dream. The mould of a decapitated skull which did not reach the grave, flesh of an unborn baby's eyeball, pulled out not far from what they called 'nature', the spine dislocated from the serpent, and the hard tongue of the lizard – shedding its blood until it died.

Profligate nature has produced a mass of prodigious monsters, the spittings of poisonous snakes, the two wings of the feared griffon, and the venomous fangs of the viper, which could blow up like a wineskin any human being or animal that it bit, and then turn their bones and flesh to powder.

In a big, transparent vase was the pierced heart of a griffon, and the rising ashes of a phoenix from the East, the grease of the serpent, and the blue fish – which in a turbulent sea obstructs the course of the boats and holds them up in spite of the winds. There was no lack of heads of scorpions, or of enraged deadly serpents, stones of pregnant eagles, maws of hungry sharks, menstrual blood and milk of whipped females, plagues, pestilences – nature produces so many lethal things.

As I was admiring the venerable apothecary, I saw, leaving through a doorway in the corner, a withered old man propped up by a curved walking stick. I recognised him as the one who had run to the coast and had almost been struck down by a crossbow shot. He said:

“It is no mean feat of courage one so young as you has dared to come to my secret dwelling which no one else has reached without my approval. But because I see it is an honourable intention which has led you so far in search of me, I want to do with you something that nobody else has done with me.”

He seemed to be a gentle companion, the time and conjuncture favourable. Then the old man who had seemed so abrasive and severe showed himself homely and amenable. He looked at me affably, with restraint, to see if I wanted to answer him. As he remained silent, I responded thus:

“Oh great Fiton, who has the gift of penetrating the secrets of the skies which, having diverged from the Eternal Circle, do not obey the laws. They are subject to you, you who revoke the decrees of hard fate – when you wish to disrupt that natural order and project events into the future – with magic science and pure knowledge breaking the hard ground, and putting the clarity of daylight into the deep, dark kingdom, and tormenting with a bitter spell the infernal prisoner, who is in terror of your force – so powerful that it can break all of his laws. Know that your renown, spread throughout the Indian regions, and as far as the North Pole, has drawn this young man to seek you. He has braved 1,000 dangers in pursuit of his quest, which called him to celebrate war and the sanguinary destruction of this land.

“One night, when I retired to write about the success of that day, I was seized by a dream – seeing what was happening in Europe. It was also revealed that in your hidden cave there will be some strange, memorable occurrences with which you can illuminate your history. You will give notice of things past, present and future – miraculous exploits and conquests – strange feats and adventures, bold, dangerous enterprises, deeds never seen in writing. This build-up is disturbing; we await your reply with bated breath.”

The old man was delighted that his renown had spread so far; he turned his aged face and to me and looked down. Finally, in a penetrating voice which belied his grey hairs, and a stern posture, he replied to me thus:

“Although there is a just prohibition against prophesying things which have not happened, and it is even less permissible to prolong a life against the decrees of the Fates. Since you have come to my hut by hidden and disused paths, I want to please you: my nephew will be your interpreter and protector.”

Having said that, he took me by the hand, then led me, with slow, heavy steps, through the small, hollow doorway into another room, and then into a beautiful chamber whose extraordinary decor and ornamentation was so luxurious and finely wrought that no tongue could describe it, nor any imagination dream up anything to exceed it.

The floor was bricked in by transparent crystalline slabs, which threw back a kaleidoscope of colour; the high ceiling, diaphanous, starry, alight with innumerable glittering stones illuminated the great chamber, which in turn reflected variegated light. Supported on columns of gold were about a hundred figures, carved in such a lifelike manner that a deaf person could think they spoke; their heroic deeds were celebrated on the broad walls where the highest achievements of arms, letters, virtue and chastity were depicted. In the midst of this spacious chamber, which measured many miles, was a miraculous apple, in the midst of a lucent sphere, suspended in mid air by art and artifice – the grand circle and the machine resting at its centre.

Having for a time feasted my eager eyes on the paintings, the walls, floor and roof with their various sculptures, the magician took me to the right globe, and having turned his face to the figures, signalling with his shepherd’s crook, began to inform me, speaking thus:

“Young man, you should know that these men are the greatest who have passed from here. Their renown for their greatest exploits has been and always will be celebrated – and some, who have risen from humble origins through their noble deeds – benign fortune has put them on the highest corner of the moon. That globe you see is a miniature of the world; its complex form cost me 40 years of study. But having done that, no large-scale future event nor secret arrangement of inexorable fate that will be obscure to me – I will have a sample of it.

“But since your purported mission is to chronicle the acts of war, and through the power of the rigorous stars you have ample material to work on, I will enlighten you about some things which the present world embraces, showing a frightening spectacle to demonstrate its importance.

“In our Arauco were found things you wantonly destroyed; here the sword and chain mail are more prevalent than elsewhere. The only thing missing is a naval battle with which your history will be fully substantiated. You must write about sea warfare as well as land warfare. What are dubious about what you have described. Nothing so frightful has been seen in the past, nor will be in the future. The Mediterranean will remain secure for the victors; the naval power of the defeated will be permanently broken.

“Stay true to my words; do not be afraid of the magic spell which, if you are attentive, will enable you to foresee the future here, point by point – all you see will have been decreed by the Fates; I assure you that you will be an eyewitness and an authentic chronicler of it all.”

I eagerly turned my face to the transparent sphere within which I saw constructed a world, as big as ours and clearly displayed, as if by a spherical mirror. Looking into it we saw in miniature a massive palace surrounded by an enormous space. In that area could be seen the tempestuous Euxine (Black) Sea, where the great struggle took place between Augustus Caesar and Mark Antony, and in the same form there appeared the band of Lepanto and Favonio, joined to the Curchulares, as far as the harbour, the wide sea covered in galleys. After seeing the insignia of the Pope, King Philip and the Venetians, one could then recognise the armadas of the infidel Turks and Christians – in battle order, ready to go ahead, though to my view they appeared to be no more than static figures.

But Fiton the magician said “You will soon see an extraordinary naval battle where the supreme valour of our Spain will be manifested.” And then, with a wild and furious gesture, striking the globe with his cane – once across it, once on the right, a hoarse voice issued from his breast, saying “Yellow whale, Cancerbero! Oh great Pluto, returned from the Inferno, oh weary old boatman Sharon, and you – lakes Estigian and Averno! Oh Demogorgon, you who dwell in the Eternal Kingdom, and the surging waters of Acheron, Leteo, Cocito and Flagetonte! And you, oh Furies, who torment damned souls with cruelty, those whom lesser deities fear to see, your brows teeming with vipers. And you, mighty gorgons, urged on by my strong words, until the future can be seen, and we witness this great naval encounter!

“O Hecate, fuming and ill-composed – make visible what I ask. Hola! Who am I talking to; what is holding you back. Why does my terrible voice not make you tremble? See that the land opposite will break, and blind you with anabominable light, and by an absolute, new-found strength and power will break the laws of Erebus.”

No sooner had he said that than the waters of the sea stirred up, and breathing the dry northeast wind, stretched the ropes and broad sails, suddenly inspiring those people. They began to move, making all the rest of the causes inherent in all those objects take effect.

Looking attentively, though frightened, through the mass of people there, I saw inscribed in letters on his brow his name and the duty he had to perform. And I much admired him looking so radiant in the midst of those youngsters, some of whom already had grey hair.

Then the Christians fired off a salvo as a signal of disengagement, and hoisted on high a crucifix which aroused fervour and passion. All bowed to it with great devotion and respect; beneath it, on all sides, were the weapons of the faithful comrades. Equipped with these and accompanied by various sounds which surrounded them, they marched forth. Standards, banners and pendants waved over the high sterns; the well-ordered bands and squadrons showed themselves flexing their arms, on the decks of the galleys, which were equipped with bronze cannon sounding off.

But it is not right for me to describe so great a thing in the low tones which I now utter. This is certainly a task for fresh breath, a more fluent tongue and a stronger voice. In view of that, sir, I would not need to proceed any further. I beg you to lend your ears to the next canto.

Canto XXIV

(This canto deals exclusively with the great naval battle, the rout and wrecking of the Turkish fleet and the escape of Ochali.)

Now the time has come, great Philip, for my voice, favoured by you, to tell of the great day defined by the mighty waves. The proud Turk was overthrown, his sea power destroyed. I shall tell of the various fates and destinies, the bloody destruction and the crude deaths.

Open your fountain to me, o sacred Muses; give me new spirit and breath with fitting language and style, thrown at me; give me the courage to describe fully and clearly the resolution of the naval conflict and those people amassed under that blow of fortune. Who will be adequate to recount the squadrons, the vast number of galleys, the multitude and mixture of nations, flags, ensigns and banners, the defences, the equipment, the munitions, the different weapons and methods, machines, devices, instruments and ornaments. There were Corvatos (?), Dalmatians, Slavs, Bulgarians, Albanians, Transylvanians, Tartars, Thracians, Greeks, Macedonians, Turks, Lydians, Armenians, Georgians, Syrians, Arabs, Lyceans (?), Nubians, Saracens, Africans, Captains, ?????

There too was found the flower of the Spanish nation's youth and gallantry, the nobility of Italy and Germany – an audacious and bizarre company, all rolling in extraordinary riches, vigorous in appearance, massed on the poop decks amidst the trinkets, streamers and pennants.

And so the armadas headed for each other, looking like two dense forests, little by little emerging into one; the bristling weapons shone forth, their reflections shimmering in the choppy sea, their flecks obstructing vision for a great distance. On each side of our fleet a fast frigate sailed, then came a young man of gallant appearance and obvious courage, sheathed in an ornate breastplate, radiating such authority that he could have been taken for the offspring of Fortune and Mars. Eager to know who he was, looking carefully at his composure I saw inscribed, on his strong sallet and his helmet, both in relief and engraved, in letters of gold against a blood-red background: Don Juan, son of Emperor Charles V. He who ran here and there amid the general hustle and bustle, in one of the frigates was the old secretary Juan de Soto, whom the old magician had described to me as being very influential in these matters, a person of great eloquence and experience, well equipped to deal with emergencies.

Then, at that dangerous moment, Don Juan urged them into battle, with a courage and a spirit that seemed to assure victory when the issue was still in doubt: his great heart made easy what fear made difficult. He poured warlike fury into his men, saying: "Oh valiant company, bulwark of the indefatigable church; let your names now go down in history, bearing your arms and oars to the fight, showing your strength and your inviolate faith against those perfidious pagans who come to die at your hands. See that today the state of the world depends on your courage and skill, and understand that each of you has a right to gain that

glory to which he aspires. Let us accelerate our fortune. Any delay will work against us – you could not fulfil your desires, you would be a mere drop in the ocean.

“Let us go on to conquer; let us not hold back while Fortune smiles on us. Let us, with one crushing blow, strike down those arrogant barbarians and make the sonorous tumult of this war reverberate throughout the land. Look at how much glory has already appeared, shining brightly on this sea; see how God has assembled so many to be brought down under our feet – and here, today, tames all the Orient, puts its neck under our yoke. See how we can take them and impose laws upon them according to God's powerful principles. There, through their perdition, let us establish the credit of Christendom throughout the world – our God wishes us to break Muslim pride and fury. What danger do you feel under such a hand? Who can resist your swords when they are divinely directed? I only ask that, trusting in Christ, who gave his life on the cross for us all, you each fight for him, proving yourselves his worthy soldiers – making a firm pledge to conquer or die: if victory is full of glory and rewards, dying for such a god is no less an honour: to that end we set forth to face the dangers and rigour of today, rallying to defend God's law against the renegade Infidel. The just cause we follow assures victory, so – as it has been promised by heaven, it can confirm that you will prevail.”

Then suddenly, even the coldest hearts were aroused to abundant fury, and all fear will be shaken from the most sluggish limbs. Everyone, raising their right arms, swore victory or death, at that point taking on the contrary power of the world - total adversity. Then that brave young man, praising that assured willpower, suddenly crossing the sea at speed, reached the midst of the armada, following its foaming wake, snatching its shining horn, breaking the thick air – he left a lasting impression.

Having rapidly put the ships and the men in order, he quickly returned to his flagship, where the artillery fired a salute, to announce his position to everyone. He then headed for the Turkish Armada. The successor of illustrious Andrea Doria, of whom the Mediterranean Sea had an everlasting memory, raised his right fist, and Augustin Barbarigo, a Venetian, provisioner of the Senatorial Armada, raised his left fist, with no less impressive a show. Then the worthy son of Charles the Great both wings, equally balanced and in good order, into battle, with the galleys of Malta and Lomelino at the tip of each wing. On the flanks, those of the papacy and Venice continued on their path, moving, with synchronised strokes, the blades of the great oars. Six galleys went ahead, in crescent formation, loaded with men, and with double rows of cannon. There were followed by thirty galleys, earmarked for general assistance, with them the Marquis of Santa Cruz came with a valiant company. In this order the Catholic Armada went in pursuit of the Infidels. It caught up with them, and then overtook. But at the worst possible moment, there was a drop in the wind and the high sea flattened its waves, Fortune leaving the resolution of the battle to courage and skill in arms.

On the other side, in the Barbarian fleet, on the right wing was Siroco, Viceroy of Alexandria, together with Memeth Bey, Corsair and Grand Master, who was at that time ruler of

Negroponto. On the left was Ochali the renegade, accompanied by his son Carabey. At the centre, locked in battle, was Ali, commander of that great Armada. Recognising the hardness of fate, and that the hour of perdition was looming – as a shrewd and daring captain, from the high poop of the royal galley, with a happy, confident air, which, through feigned deference, belittled the power of the Christians, he made this speech:

“Soldiers: I don't think it's my job to give you reasons to arouse and motivate you. From what I can see, your good intentions are fully manifest: to channel your anger, satisfy the desires of your fiery hearts, and take up those arms in which the Fates place our just cause. Never has fortune shown herself so benign, so fully revealed to our eyes – then, loaded with glory and leftovers, arrived at our door. Let us finish the job and end the distress of this protracted war, substantiating the hope and endorsing the credit which is always been accorded to your valour. We are not deterred by the sights and sounds surrounding the enemy fleet; remember this has been assembled from about 1,000 nations. Fortune has concentrated it in one neck which can be severed with one blow, and delivered to our gracious sovereign by your hands.

“This rabble who comes here, low in courage and numbers, are those who hold us back, and stop us from becoming world conquerors. Let our arms show the power they have; let them take from their unworthy possessors those provinces and kingdoms of the Poniente (?) which you had come to hand over so blindly. That vain captain is of very little substance and account – no sense of direction, discipline or experience, he is unworthy to be in charge of this task. Presumptuous and hot-headed, with youthful ardour and blindness, he leads all those people, condemned to the fury and rigour of your sword.

“Do not think that the Fates have sold us today's victory at a very high price. The most timid part of this armada is from the Duchy of Venice – a people neither industrious nor battle-hardened – given more to carousing, and to the soft delights of their country, than to the robust pursuit of war. That throng has been drawn together from many nations; it lacks cohesion. and those types don't know what a sword is. Before battle commences, their cries of terror will muffle the frightful sound of the artillery. But you, invincible men, raised amidst savage arms and tried in frightful wars and labours; what terrible perils have faced you, what hostile hordes have been unleashed upon you that would be enough to frighten you or to cool your fiery spirits.

“I see the glorious casualty roster and death toll at your hands, and this interposing sea, as it swells, has its foam tinted red with blood. Open up then, and break out, for these people – that Christian power struck down to the depths – with one decisive blow taking possession of the world, from the Ganges to Chile, from the North Pole to the South.”

And so the Bey, a short distance away, inspired the soldiers who stood at the ready, assuring them of the success of their heroic enterprise. But in the secret depths of his heart, he knew that things would be more difficult, taking as a contrary open the grim determination of the enemy. And, like a rodent who just caught sight of a cat, when seeing our fleet, said "The central column, the right wing and the supply column following it – unless my eyes deceive me, is of a very powerful fleet and army." Baja felt no less than a sense of death on seeing the

Christians, but, showing determination and a strong heart, covered up his secret fear, and so he directed his crack squadron, escorted by two auxiliary wings, towards the Christians' central column, which was in battle order.

Having already reached the breaking point which the precise Fates signalled, with equal fury and movement, the mighty armadas grappled together. In a flash, on both sides, the loaded cannon discharged, with a racket that made the whole world seem to tremble. The smoke, the fire, the terrible uproar spat out by the furious shots, the turbulence and the horrendous sight of broken prows and mastheads, the stupendous clash of arms, the hubbub of voices, yells and callings of names, made gruesome harmony with the surrounding spectacle of chaos. There was not such a clamour in the city of Priam, devastated, smarting from the crude blows of the Christian swords, as could be heard between the Turkish and Christian fleets – turned into smoke and fire, so that the very sea seemed to burn, the ground to sink and the skies fall down.

The gallant Don Juan, having recognised the real enemy, surged ahead, slicing the waves, to break into the midst of the roaring flames. But the Turk parried him with a well-directed thrust; on equal terms, they charged furiously into collisions, breaking their serried lines. They had not remade their formations when, in a great rush, seven well-armed Turkish galleys charged at the Christians, but with no lesser fury the rescuers came, from right and left – the Papal and Venetian general, who deputised for Marus Antony Colona, General of the Papacy – a squadron of vigorous young men. Taking the clearest path, the patron of Spain attacked, breaking the thrust and bulk of the pagan fleet.

The brave Prince of Parma, who was with the Genoese captain splitting the choppy, fuming sea, rushed to the midst of the beleaguered squadron. The subsequent confusion and turmoil, the cloud of thick black smoke obstructed my eager vision; much was hidden from me. For his part Mons de Leni, rapidly, with his galley, swept forward to close the gap. He reached the position of the brave Prince of Urbino who made a supreme demonstration of his courage, spirit and virtue in clashing with the barbarian fury. Then, with equal force, others came to board, getting packed so tight they could barely wield their swords. Death was not strong enough to strike fear into their hearts, not did they flinch from danger – although in the assault they saw cannons firing at their breasts.

So the irate men, eager to deal their blows, and released a tempest of thrusts and missiles. The way those proud arms shook looked like a bubbling cauldron. The sea was suddenly covered in blood as it began to receive the bodies. They relentlessly sustained their attack on the prows, poops and sides. Some were drowned, some cut down, some perished in the flames. But on all those wretched positions there was no lack of replacements; neither falling bodies nor artillery barrages sufficed to clear a space. Some were cut down trying to board the enemy vessels; some, having no time to strike their adversaries, fell into the sea, and were carried off by its fury. Others, trusting in their swimming and their strength, grabbed their odious foes and dragged them into the waves.

Who would not tremble to see this spectacle, which looked like the end of the world, total ruin – so many perishing at once, so many cannons, culverins and missiles. Even the sun, gathering its rays with a disturbed face the colour blood, hid among the black clouds so as not to see the havoc wrought that day.”

Here and there, furious in face and heart, riding his speedy chariot, accompanied by Tesiphon and Aleto charged wild, sanguinary Mars. Now he shook his strong arm, now he wielded his flashing shield, infusing the men, already brave, with extra, heightened ardour. Whoever lacked weapons would seize pieces of oars or masts; some unshackled the galley slaves, and sees their chains, fetters and manacles. There was nothing of metal wood or stone, even benches and barrels, which would not serve as a weapon. The blows and shots which they dealt (although resisted by hard steel) threw the enemies whom they hit into the reddened waves; burning in the chilly water they struggled on, without giving in to adverse fate – until the ultimate point when all life left them.

Some, with loss of blood, died under water, some, seizing boards and planks, gave up their souls, transfixed. Others, being unable to inflict more damage, set upon those least wounded, and struggled to throw them overboard, happy to die while killing. Some, pursued by crude steel and flames, jumped into the sea to save themselves; some, trying to drown, seized burning planks. With the urge to escape, clutching at vain remedies, they died of their burns in the water and drowned in the midst of the flames.

Many, already struggling with death, sustained their determination, strengthening the blows and sharpening the lances which surged from their strong arms, struggling in the swelling waves, shaking their tired arms at those they bumped into, with the rage and little strength which remained with them.

The fury and grating sounds of battle intensified. The sea was disturbed everywhere, regurgitating bodies, stirred up by the contrary winds which also battered the close-packed galleys. On the high poop deck, by the standard, glorious Don Juan shone forth in his splendour. More incensed than irate Mars. From his post, he arranged remedies everywhere – orders here, reinforcements there, his personality assuring everyone of the final triumph of the naval arm. On the other side, Don Luys de Requesens exhorted, cajoled, turned and returned, wherever danger most demanded it. He provided, remedied, arrived, ordered, urged, persuaded, right and left, on poop deck and prow, gaining esteem and eternal praise. Then Don Pliego, Count of Fernando, diligent and scrupulous, came to all parts – saving the most precarious situations. And so the Christians and the Turks, both sides seeking an honourable resolution, strove to die on board the ships of their enemies.

So great was the fury and the strife that it felt like Armageddon. The dense flood of blows and shots suffused the clear air and the reddened sea. The rage grew; there was an endless barrage from the artillery; the deafening clashing of swords resounded to distant shores. The good Marquis of Santa Cruz, who was prepared to give general assistance, seeing that there was a deadlock and that the division was unequal in places, without further ado rushed into

the middle of the fray, facing with a furious attack the most dangerous and horrendous areas.

Then, ablaze, without seeming to run, he wove back and forth in the battle area, entered, left and returned to the fray, sometimes resisting 3 or 4 times his numbers. Who could ever, point by point, tell of the gallant blades which distinguished themselves that day, swelling the sea with Turkish blood?

Don Juan, irate and impatient, goaded generous Fortune, spurring on his men, who were drenched in their own and their enemies' blood. Ali Baha, no less diligent, exhorted his men with great fervour, ever reminding them of the great honours and rewards of victory. But Christendom, with the advantage of its commanders, through sheer strength and prowess, opened up a wide channel in the Turkish fleet, through which a dense column surged irresistibly ahead with extraordinary fury, crying "Close! Close! Spain! Spain!"

On seeing this, the Turks, terror-stricken, turned on their foes in such a way that the Christians were repulsed. but adding extra fury after their first attack, the outraged Spaniards struck again, and drove them to the great tree where, rallying in face and foot, they renewed the battle, reviving the wild havoc and barbarous slaughter.

They helped out on one side and another, exhausted by the delay, desperate to conquer or die, putting up a great struggle against the dubious Fates. The masses of wounded lying on the battered prow sometimes got in the others' way, but when given medical attention, they rose to fight again, beating down the enemy forces which seemed to be rallying. To this hot point, which was heavier than elsewhere, don Bernardino (more spirited than he looked) came to the rescue. On he way, with sudden fury, he was knocked down, a heavy blow halting his footsteps and his intrepid plan. So powerful was the blow that his strong breastplate, garnished for combat, could not withstand it. Finally that young man, through his honourable death, assured the precarious lives of all, making 1,000 Spanish swordsmen swear to avenge his death.

In this, the famous Captain of Malta was attacked, seized by everyone and beaten with insane fury to settle old scores. Buit the well-known strength and virtue of that brave knight, battling with the pagan horde, spread far and wide.

But the Viceroy of Argel, veteran Corsair, who until then had been looking on - seeing there was a gap in the right wing, before it could close, he fiercely lunged at its side again, sinking 3 boats, with an infinite number of infidels. The stalwart knights, fighting, resisted this attack, but finally, sir, the sheer weight of numbers prevailed. They slit all their foes' throats, without leaving a single man alive, pouring a foaming river of baptized blood into the surging sea.

The galleys of Malta, which observed the captain's entrance so closely, despised the proud enemies which whom they had commenced battle. Thrashing their oars, they threw themselves forward with renewed rage at breakneck speed, as avengers of the Christian martyrs against the pagan host. So strong was that feeling among the soldiers, so great their thirst for vengeance that they tackled the Turks on all sides, making a meat stockyard. And

so, victorious and avenged, they recovered and returned to the galley, leaving only the General and four knights alive. Marco Antonio Colona despising the courageous enemy assault, fought vigorously, matching strength with honourable ambition. Then Sebastian Veniero, facing the Turkish force, the barbarian pride, avenged with just rage the injuries inflicted in Famagusta. The Sicilian captain Portau Baja also fought there; he was surrounded by galleys. The courage of the Christians was such that it made up for any disadvantage in numbers; they did not just hold their own – they gained sea space.

Don Juan, of the line of Cardona, fulfilling his old function there, exposed himself to danger, giving an ample demonstration of his courage. The proud nation of Barcelona made sacrificial victims of the enemy, their swords drenched to the hilt in barbarian blood. With no less spirit and force, wise Barbarigo fought on, his courage matching the hopes which his striving had raised; then he dented Turkish confidence. But although he opposed the Saracen fury with a brave face and spirit, he could not withstand hard fate or – better to say, a Divine Order which declared that his time had come, as he stopped an arrow in mid-flight, that arrow wounded him in the eye, and soon after he fell dead.

Although their grief was great at seeing such a captain fall, this did not disrupt the intent of the emboldened Venetian people; rather were they fired with greater fury, and thirst for rightful revenge. The wrought such havoc on his killers as to compensate well for his death.

At this time, the struggle was restricted to the right wing, where the shrewd, astute Don Juan showed himself to be a past master; also Hector Spinola struggled on both right and left, highlighting in the midst of the furore the skilful, agile men of Liguria. The bitter struggle went on for two and a half hours more, without it being known who had prevailed, with no victory to be declared, when brave Don Juan, raging in fury, complaining of a vacillating Fate, began to step up his efforts, without feeling any doubt, declaring his fortune to be supreme. With a piercing cry he rushed to the attack and beat down the Muslim fury, entering the Turkish realm where the barbarian standard was struck down, and the Cross of the Redeemer hoisted on high with solemn triumph and great glory, proclaiming the victory. Suddenly the wretched Turks were frozen in terror. Their arms were numb, all the strength knocked out of them. Abandoning their swords and souls, they gave themselves up to their wretched fate, allowing free entry to the enemy assault. Then, right and left, flushed with bloody victory, the Christians slit their throats everywhere. Whoever jumped in the water, they pierced his breast. Some ran into the flames to escape the knife, thinking fire to be more compassionate.

Cunning Ochali, seeing his men being destroyed by the Christian assault, his wretched armada consigned to steel, fire and water, retreated to the west, followed abjectly by those wrecks which had barely escaped from the inferno. But the son of Carlos, seeing the base intent of their renegade traitor, gave chase, cutting deep swathes in the swirling sea. After them went de Bazan and de Oria, sailing to leeward with a squadron of galleys, trying to overtake them. But that pathetic rabble, seeing a narrow path and fearful of the broad sea,

turned their prows to the nearby coast, and made a big attack on the land. In their struggle, they threw themselves like a swarm of locusts into the raging sea, fleeing the peril in terror.

Some countered the sweeps of the waves with arms, with arms, shoulders, faces and breasts, some, without looking down as far as the bottom, unable to swim, learned how to there. There are no ties of kinship, nor of close friendship, nor of fatherly care for a son, which can ever compare to those bonds made by fear, enemy of respect. And so, strengthened by fear, they set foot on the sandy beach and fled inland among the rocks and trees. Then, having dealt destruction, the miserable barbarians left, the power of Austria having been imposed on the Ottomans.

* * *

I was very happy to see the great, promised success when, in the globe the potent magic, twisting with camel grass, was heating and circulating the air, and the great noise suddenly stopped, leaving the sea quite calm, covered by a thick, dark mist.

Then Fiton, chattering, took me through the room, and without digressing, told me everything, piece by piece. But fearing that it will be annoying to you to be given the full details, I will miss out those bits which, though memorable in themselves, are not relevant to our story.

I will just say that I left the magician and Guatolico very happy and, although late, I returned to my lodging where they had already given me up for lost. Then, turning my pen to our story (from which I had made a substantial digression) I will say that we were two weeks in a false sense of security and vain hope. But we never allowed for the determination of our crafty enemies, nor understood their cunning and spirit, which kept us in doubt and suspense. Because of this oversight, we avoided taking dangerous paths in pursuit of them, but headed for open country, with our desire to finish off the war.

One evening, as the sun was going down, we reached a densely populated valley, crossed by a big river and surrounded by cultivated hillsides, and in the flattest area, most suitable for an encampment, we erected our bell tents. Scarcely had camp been set up than there emerged through the trees a well-armed Araucanian bearing the banner of Don Garcia; as soon as he arrived, that barbarian, without a sign or courteous introduction, began to say . . . *but meanwhile it would be good to end my canto here.*

Canto XXV

(The Spaniards set up their camp in Millarapue; an Indian comes to challenge them on behalf of Caupolicán and there is a bitter, bloody fight. Tucapel and Rengo distinguish themselves. This Canto tells of the gallantry shown by the Spanish that day.)

It is something worthy of consideration, not to be glossed over, that a people so isolated from outside contacts, surrounded by un-navigable gulfs, achieved what elsewhere was only managed by the most famous on earth. Let us writers stop celebrating those who discovered the military arts, the inventors of hard steel and gun metal – and concentrate on those inhabitants of the Araucanian state, who achieved such mastery of warfare and discipline that we could all learn from them.

Who showed them how to formulate squadrons, assemble in battle order, raise horsemen and bastions, make defensive networks, ditches and walls, trenches, other obstacles? The innovations they discovered in warfare are ample proof of the courage and acumen of these people. Above all they must be praised for their silence and discipline in war; never was a secret extorted from any of them by bribes, threats or violence – as I have explained already, there is abundant evidence of this. We never got anything from them by guile or by the spies we employed in those days. Many of the local people were kidnapped and taken prisoner, but they all steadfastly resisted torture. So often we tried to get them talking about things which could betray them; these measures only served to sharpen their caution and our deceit.

But as I have explained: hardly had our army set up camp when a gallant young man arrived asking for the whereabouts of our captain. Then in the captain's presence, surrounded by many people, he raised his voice without respect, saying freely: "Oh Christian Captain. If you are eager to gain honour and renown, benign Fortune now brings your opportunity. Great Caupolicán is eager to test your mettle, to see if strength and virtue are really there: he challenges you to single combat. He has been told by many that you are a noble young man, flourishing, well-versed in the art of war, Commander of this force. Given the advantage of your rank, here you have a chance to prove your strength and fortune without any props.

"I also understand that you wish to meet the Araucanian army. I warn you that they will come to this plain at the break of dawn. They will be tightly packed everywhere, but if you are willing to do single combat, a path will be cleared for you. We agree that if you win, the land will submit to your authority and that you can do what you want, unrestricted by respect or by clemency. If you are defeated, we will leave you in your pre-eminence; we want no other prize or glory than the honour of victory. Note that this offer is made because of your reputation as a brave man; for as long as the bright sun extends its rays, your memory shall remain among the people. I end by saying that you, with courage and dignity should enter a hand-to-hand contest with the great Caupolicán. That is the message I have come to deliver. I beg you to decide, briefly, of your own free will whether, according to the terms offered, you accept or reject this challenge – which is dangerous to the extreme. I am sure that your pride

and spirit will assure you that you can do justice to your honour and that of him who has sent me.

Don Garcia replied: "I am happy to accept the challenge; I guarantee that the location and the agreement of our people, will be assured". The Indian, listening attentively, happily said "I swear that this worthy response will make you forever famous among our people." With this, without moving any further forward, he walked off – his arrogant demeanour showing his low opinion of us. Some judged from his appearance that he was cunning – a double agent who had come to reconnoitre our position.

Then night came. We put the soldiers in battle order; pikes at the ready, we stood counting the stars, sleepy, worn out by the weight of our weapons, *although we never gave credence to that Indian, thinking he had only come to spy out the land.*

As night slowly descended, it turned round its stars to face the sunset; as dawn rose in the east, it turned off all their lights, sprinkling the flowers with its fresh dew, restoring to full colour those that the shadowy, gloomy darkness had reduced to monochrome. Then, with a sudden, high-pitched cry, there appeared, on both sides – in three divisions, the barbarian army – in battle array. Each squadron had its full compliment of men, marching in good order with fast, swaggering paces – surrounding our narrow encampment.

The horsemen were poised for the enemy, reins at the ready. But before the latter came, our detachment made a pre-emptive strike up a rugged slope – heading for the left squadron and attacking it furiously; it was just like a sturdy embankment that could not withstand a tidal wave. But Caupolicán, who went well ahead of his force, drew back towards his people and ordered his pikemen into diamond-shaped formations to face the extraordinary assault, and do much damage to its vanguard. Some, with a light thrust, were unsaddled; others were thrown sky high, and then embossed the earth with their bodies. Those who did not bite the dust, though they fought a brave fight, left the encounter badly mauled. Our men were not deterred by these blows, which hit their targets without fail. Some crossed over from band to band, others had their breasts trampled on. In an instant the two forces mingled, their swords in clashing congestion, with such noise and strife – like a frightful volcano erupting.

Brave Caupolicán, with his reddened pike and sturdy mace, hitting right and left, wounded, destroyed, killed and cast his foes to the ground – akin to Berzocano, his teeth and furious fists clenched, dealing blows so hard they dented helmets and sallets. He knocked down some and slew others who happened, through misfortune, to be near him, unseamed, mangled, broke and wrecked, flattening the rough path. He seized the Indian tenant Tambo, and – like a falcon with a parrot or a dove, without recognising him properly, strangled him with his bare hands.

Bernal and Leucoton rushed to join in this showdown; attacking furiously, flexing their arms with equal strength and rage, carrying their breeding under their weight, kneeling down at once with grinding teeth and cartilage. But each one went upright again and launched into a

fierce new combat: now pulling at the feet, now the head, now seizing the helmet, now the shield. They pushed a pace forward but could get no further; a streaming mob, closing in on them, forced them back by weight of numbers.

Don Miguel and Don Pedro de Avendano, Rodrigo de Quiroga, Aguirre, Aranda, Cortes and their followers, at extraordinary risk, withstood the weight of the assault; Reynoso, Pena, Cordova, Miranda, Monguia, Lasarte, Castaneda, Ulloa, Martin Ruz and Juan Lopez de Gamboa were all highly effective, inflicting many casualties. Then, struggling on, Don Luis de Toledo, Carranza, Aguayo, Zuniga and Castillo, together with Diego Can, Perez and Ronquillo resisted the fury of the Indian band; the elder Alvarados Juan and Hernando, Pedro de Olmos, Peredes and Carrillo gallantly struck down the enemy, although at some cost in blood and lives.

Seeing the bitter struggle on the right wing, the middle squadron speeded up and rushed to their aid with horrendous fury. But our men, divided into *tercios*, rushed on them at full pelt. Shaken by this terrible struggle, the earth pressed against its centre. There were many casualties, great blows of maces and pikes; lances, gorgets and arms with handles were thrown sky high in 1,000 pieces. At one moment, swords clashed; at another, more furious, bare arms, inflicting searing wounds with their slashes and blows. Proud Tucapel, making his attack, killed a good soldier. Little satisfied with this blow, he seized a sharp sword with which he pierced Guillermo's breast; attacking with a back thrust he sent two heads, with their sallets, far away from their bodies. He easily slew Torbo with one blow, and wounded Juan Ynaruana so badly that his armoured head fell from his shoulders. Another blow he struck at Pico, taking out his entrails and his life – but as he was inattentive at that moment he was wounded by more than ten swords.

The barbarians could hear the reverberations of the havoc, and then surrounded him in a confused mass. But he contemptuously turned his strong arm on them; with great fury and daring he hacked at them, inflicting heavy casualties.

More rage and fury were ignited as the effort and danger increased; there, honour and glory could be claimed when things were most difficult. For whoever tackled the most precarious, the most risky, what seemed barely feasible, a great heart and an invincible soul cleared a path and facilitated the impossible. The last and biggest squadron, true to plan, climbed the big hill at a fast though ordered pace. Seeing our squadron assembled on the plain below, they cunningly held back, reconnoitring the site and our people. Then, at the head of this squadron came young Sergeant Galbarino, who revealed his arm stumps, the wounds bleeding profusely. He rushed from one side to the other, surveying the general carnage, arousing hearts to fury with powerful arguments:

“Oh valiant soldiers, so worthy of that name, into whose hands Fortune and the benign Fates have placed the future of Arauca. Be confident of victory: this tumult, this vain display comes from a mere remnant of those you have conquered so many times. Tell yourselves that this

final battle will be completed according to your desires: nothing will stand in your way – neither lance nor sword. Think of the infamous deaths or wretched lives which face the conquered, the savage tortures which the victor promises to the vanquished. If you are defeated in this battle, the rule of law will perish and liberty be buried, leaving you under a brutal yoke – unfit for the pursuit of war. Then, united with brute beasts, you will have to till the soil and cultivate the land, doing the most servile chores and women’s tasks. Then keep it fixed in your memory that disgrace will last forever, but that victory will assure that your heroic deeds are always celebrated. Consider, then, soldiers, that glory which this venture has prepared for us, and the great honour which, as I say, a brief operation can procure. Whoever proves to be a good soldier will hold in his hand anything he loves, and in all that we desire, Fortune needs us today; think also that whoever does not conquer stands condemned as a rebel and a traitor; whoever has been conquered justly and without punishment will be left to the enemy for judgement.”

In that way the intrepid barbarian aroused anger and hope, so that the squadron, barely obedient, could accept the order and the delay. But when the last signal was given, with great resolution, brandishing their pikes, they marched on in close formation, their fury aroused.

On that rutted, stony plain which extended for more than an arrow shot, our squadron also set forth; and so the raging legions of both sides got to grips with inhuman, demonic fervour, and mountains of corpses piled up. The pikes did not long last unbroken; their fragments hurtled through the air, their extended staves and blades were split in combat. Men died there from a thousand causes; many perished without wounds, choked by dust, weighed down by weapons; others were knocked out by heavy blows. The horrendous battle was fought with feverish rage, each side showing equal tenacity, strength and skill. The furious struggle rose to the skies, and all the country resounded. Everywhere one could see was flooded with a quagmire of dead bodies.

Hearts were seething; the ceaseless struggle intensified. No chain mail or armour could ward off the entry of furious death which with inexorable, horrendous fury turned everyone to its form; there was engendered from that mortal havoc a broad lake of coagulated black blood.

Proud Rengo on the left side kept on intensifying the struggle, provoked by the gnawing affront which he had received from Andrea in Mataquito. In rancorous tones with his arm lifted, he wandered through the camp, here and there, from one side to the other, calling the enemy name in vain. Then Andrea, also trying to resolve the dispute, desired it – but he who went in search of one and the other (both parties) changed the course of both their fortunes – the young Italian, struggling in the other squadron, went far away, doing things with his extraordinary strength which, though lawful, were pitiable. He killed Trulo with one blow, straightened out the hard point and pierced Pinol, took off a piece of Teguan’s arm twirled him around the arena, lopped off Changle’s head with one blow, and cut Pon’s body in two at the middle; he sliced Norpo up to the chest and left Brancolo like a crane, with only one foot.

You will see that here in Orompillo a mortal conflict arose, with its great tumult and massed

voices. The broad land was covered in corpses – and seeing the gallant Genoese, he closed with him like a fattened tiger, his mace on high, with gestures of fury, poised on tiptoe.

The young man was caught by a mace sticking into the crest of his helmet, which was dented, dangling over his doublet of quilted cotton. The Italian was stunned, coughed blood, went pale, and falling on the ground, saw the stars glimmering and flashing. Then the young man renewed his attack – more furious, but less well-directed. So as not to be sidelined in this programme, he ended up between the two. The Genoese, exasperated and blinded, was a bit fazed, but recovered and got back on his feet, brandishing his broadsword with both hands. With a mighty sweep it went above the young man, in such a way that if the ironed log had not stopped it, it would have cut him into two, from top to bottom. The sword sliced the log as if it were a soft cane, and if its edge had not been twisted by the blow, it would have cut a wound so deep that the young man would have lost his life. Seeing the Araucanian, though he was without his mace, the flames of his fury did not subside. In a flash, he seized a piece of wood from the plaza, and broke off its tip. Like someone who does not fear harm, with only a fragment, short as a stick, he attacked his unsuspecting enemy.

He wounded him in the head, then nimbly jumped on one side, dodging the body, so that the Italian's sword hit mid-air. He tried again, forcefully rejoining the fray at the time of the diversion. The Genoese was so faint that he could not cover himself with his red shield. He threw down his mighty sword, a great part of the defences, brutally taking down the sallet which could not protect his head. The sword slashed the helmet, leaving the young man stunned. But he turned on his adversary and grappled with him, throwing him down with his strong arms. That brave Genoese, who could think of dismembering proud Mars, fiercely resisted, but was deceived into thinking that nobody could attack him from the right. Turning round in both directions, the one refuted the feet of the other; legs and knees were intertwined in skilful and persuasive feints.

Don Garcia de Mendoza did not stop – sometimes fighting on fiercely and doggedly, other times encouraging his men. Also Juan Remon stood bravely – like as shrewd soldier and captain, both disciplined and energetic. Santillan and Do Pedro de Navarre, Avalos, Viezzma, Caceres, Bastida, Galdamez, Don Francisco Ponce, Ybarra, dealing death, defended their own lives well; Factor Vega and Bursar Segarra had thrown part of the enemy back. Following them were Velazquez and Cabrera, Verdugo, Ruyz, Riberos and Ribera.

They followed their leaders to the other side. Then many more men came – Don Felipe, Don Simon and Prado, Don Francisco Arias, Pardo and Alegria, Barrios, Diego de Lira, Coronado and Don Juan de Pineda in company, putting up a heroic fight. But they did not subdue the enemy. Florencio de Esquivel and Altamirano, Villarroel, Doran, Vergera, Lago, Godoy, Gonzalo Hernandez and Andicano increased the havoc. If I do not mention everyone here, it is not because I have intentionally omitted them. I could not possibly describe the actions of everyone battling at the same time.

Then at midday there arose the sound of the other squadron. Rengo, enraged, propelled by his stamina and courage, had put himself so much in the thick of the battle that he could not turn to his own men; surrounded by the little people, he was badly wounded and hotly pursued.

He turned on them, striking right and left; rotating like a wheel, he made them keep their distance, chastising many as he went. But the crowd, darting nimbly here and there, assailed him on all sides with blows and missiles, sticks and spears, thrown from afar. One left him crippled, the next dead; his armour could not defend him. Whoever aimed the crucial blow completely disfigured him, while those less certain and effective broke his arms, legs and other joints; there were reddened suits of armour and helmets, joined to pulp-crushed heads.

As I have said, though he fought with an indefatigable energy and spirit they reduced him to such straits that he could not escape, and although he fought on, he was worn out. The continual furious movement asphyxiated him. He was on the ground, on one knee that could scarcely hold him up, and the tenacious people, in a team, never giving him any respite, wore him out. Then, from the other side, on the tip of a high hill, Tucapel arrived, wielding his trusty mace to clear a path for him as he surged ahead.

Just like a fierce bull, when it roars, its tongue swollen, surrounded by the mayhem, he tried proving his sword with each of them. Suddenly, on the other side, neck stiff and brow raised, appeared the other famous man of Jarama who could disperse the squadron. And so the famous Rengo, already on the ground, fought on his knees in the middle of the mob which, little by little, had surrounded him – when the bloody, brave Tucapel, who was crying for him, came to his aid, without hesitation, and broke through the throng to assist him. Tucapel knocked down half a dozen of the enemy, which left him with very little room to manoeuvre. The other Spaniards, scattered in a circle, were frightened of exhausted Rengo; in their rage they directed their weapons and cries at Tucapel. But he gave such a good account of himself that they kept their distance. He reached Rengo and said:

“Although you are my enemy, gallant Rengo, stand firm; now the one and only Tucapel is with you, and you cannot have a disastrous fate: benign Heaven and Destiny have prepared you for a better death; then it will be at my hands, if you fight a duel with me now.” Rengo replied: “If I did not have a reputation for ingratitude at such a time, I would settle my score with you – I am not as tired as you think.”

With that, more sprightly than if he had been at rest for ten hours, he rose to his feet and attacked our men, his brawny body firm and mace on high. Tucapel replied: “In view of your weakness, it would be despicable, and worthy of condemnation among men, to attack you with such an advantage in strength. The time will come when this weapon will deal you pain and a deserved death just as it has now granted you life.” He said no more; on their way, the two Araucanian rivals, making friendship and company, walked on as if they were brothers.

One guarded and defended the other. With diligence and quick hands, gallantly reaching the squadron, they made a junction with their own people.

Everywhere the battle proceeded bloodily and on bad terms – with such intensity that there was no person unwounded, no idle weapon; *and in distant, cavernous Turkey, they were seized by the force of the winds blowing in a hard, bitter accent.*

The cries of each band, and the fury of the blows, intensified like a black, wind-blown cloud. Seized by the gale it struck a searing shaft, leaving branches stripped of their foliage, shaking walls, ceilings and roofs, wreaking terrible havoc. In just such a manner, but with greater fury, the murderous weapons were unleashed, and through deep, savage wounds bodies were drained of blood. The din, and the desperate cries, echoed in the nearby mountains. The confused sea was disturbed by the sound; its swollen waves ebbd.

But on the left wing, where battle had first been joined, where Caupolicán valiantly struggled against the fury of bitter fate, and by pure force surpassed the tenacity of the Christian squadron which, little by little, yielded ground until it reached the thickly wooded slopes of the mountains.

So great was the turmoil of that hour, so violent the barbarian attack that the Araucanians, in sonorous voices, sang of victory and conquest. But deceitful Fortune turned its wheel, reversing the improvement, juggling the declared fate. The last squadron, where our final hope and remedy lay, put itself into the struggle, fighting fiercely and inflicting many casualties, so that neither the courage of Ongolmo nor the power of Lincoya were enough to withstand it – nor can I go into the details now. *I shall have to concentrate on them in the next Canto.*

Canto XXVI

(This canto describes the end of the battle and the retreat of the Araucanians, the dogged pertinacity of Galbarino – and his death. It also depicts that garden in the state of Fiton the magician.)

No-one can call himself adventurous until he sees the uncertain end of life. Nor can anyone be free of the tempestuous sea unless he is safely anchored in harbour. It is very doubtful that one good thing will ensue from another, but it is always certain that any bad thing has a substantial spin-off. Prosperous times never last; nor does misery cease to endure. The proof is right in front of us. This chronicle clearly shows how short-lived was the happiness and deceptive glory of the Araucanians. Having defeated the Christians and sung of their victory, they were knocked down by contrary fates: the conquerors became the conquered. As I told you, the last squadron (and I was there) gained ground; they held off a strong barbarian force. As a leader, Lincoya made a firm stand against adverse fortune; but he could not finally resist the impetus and fury of our people. In a dense, rugged thicket between two hills, the barbarian horde was broken, its menacing pride and daring overcome by dumb fear, turning its bold swords, fleeing the angry face of death which had shown itself clearly to everyone. Our men followed up their victory – although nobody wanted to enter the wild scrubland and forest; they wanted to know what was hidden there.

The bitter struggle and mortalities did not cease, nor did the destruction and the grating noise, as they cautiously stabbed and beat in the tangled bushes of the thicket. *They were like game animals harried and flushed by hunters, encircled in a broad sweep and reduced to a narrow space.* Impatient with desire, we attacked them in flight, and threw lances, darts and javelins at them. Our men, until then Christians, stepped over the mark with cruel and inhuman acts, besmirched their great victory. The surrender and the protestation of obedience and service was not enough to restrain the fury of the sword on these demoralised people. And so my understanding and my pen, though accustomed to the havoc of war, quails at the carnage that befell the defenders of the land – the blood which ran in streams through cracks in the mountains, the groans and cries of the wretched, defeated barbarians.

Those on the left flank, seeing the destruction of their main squadron, losing all heart, abandoned the land and honour that they had won. So they sounded the trumpet to retreat, and at a concentrated pace, waving their banners on high, they headed for the hills. It would not be right to pass over the fearless Rengo, since separated from his broken people in their wretched flight – proud, arrogant, indomitable, impatient, paying no heed to mortal danger, giving ever more fury to his steeled mace, defended the conquered square alone. Brave and seemingly invincible, he struggled on alone there for a long time, but seeing that his efforts were futile, and that there were none of his people nearby, with slow, deliberate strides he turned round a path to his right which led to a thicket. There, in terror, some of the fugitives had hidden. But on seeing Rengo, their flagging spirits revived; with renewed effort and a

show of confidence, they re-formed their squadron, turning their faces and torsos to face the tide of obdurate fate.

I was around in that area and also heard the noise. Sensing the cries and new stirrings resonating from the thicket, I quickened up my pace, heading for the source of the noise. At the edge of the thicket I saw some Spaniards standing round. On lone side was Juan Remon, crying “gentlemen; come in – they’ve all been wiped out”. But sensing danger, the others opposed that risky entry. When I reached, on foot, the place where the cautious people were, Juan Remon, recognising my face, acknowledged me publicly, saying:

“Oh Don Alonso: this is the moment for anyone eager to gain esteem and advantage, to distinguish himself with honour. This thicket where the Indians have hidden, will not impede your destiny; victory will be accredited to whoever penetrates the defended entrance.”

On hearing my well-known name, everyone turned to look at me. Impelled by honour and vengeance, unable to ignore me at that moment, through the thicket, more fearful, they began their attack, and put me in danger: Arias Pardo, Maldonado, Manrique and Don Simon de Coronado followed me. In despair of their lives they tackled the obstinate Indians who with tightly closed ranks awaited the Spanish onslaught. They heard the sound of our men on all sides, starting a bloody, dangerous battle with high-pressure fury. The destruction was renewed, making victory dubious, even the least aroused overcoming the most daunting obstacles. Who could ever describe to you that sweeping movement of arms, the wounds on both sides, and the mortal casualties? Some inflicted wounds in the groin, others pierced irate breasts through and through; some cut muscles off bodies; others fell, completely dismembered. The savage blows reverberated throughout the thicket, both sides tightly interlocked, struggling desperately with arms, fists, even teeth.

But death the great definer helped the winning side to end the struggle on that fateful day. The Araucanians were swiftly routed in that narrow copse, but they threw away their weapons rather than their lives, wanting final vengeance against the hated Spaniards. With closed ranks, the indomitable barbarians made an orderly retreat, while our soldiers, gathering the loot which they found and taking large numbers of prisoners, returned to their bell tents. Twelve men were selected from the prisoners – the best prepared and most gallant, who with their noble insignia and garments, showed themselves to be prominent persons. These were held up as examples to intimidate the rest, hanged from trees to dangle in the wind.

Appalled by what I saw on reaching the scene, I tried to save one of them, saying that he had come to join our army. But then he raised his arms (which had been hidden under his doublet), and showed the stumps where his hands had been. It was Galbarino, whom I told you about in the last Canto. As a reprisal measure, example and warning, they had cut off his hands. With his usual courage, revealing his enmity hitherto concealed, he looked at everyone and spoke thus:

“Oh demented, detestable people, unworthy of the glory of this day! Slake your insatiable thirst with this loathsome blood of mine! The proud fates have overthrown the Araucanian kingdom. But we will die rather than be conquered, and our free souls oppressed. Do not think that we fear death; for our hopes lie with her. If we prolong odious life, it is to make our ultimate vengeance greater. When we cannot reach a satisfactory conclusion, we retain confidence in the sword – which will leave you and be directed to the Araucanians, as the power to give us life. What are you waiting for then? Why don’t you give me my just reward? Death, not life, is for me, as through Death my debts are paid. But if anyone is squeamish about taking this vital step, he has not taken on board the mutilation, with these teeth and lopped-off arms.”

In this way the barbarian, in a high-pitched voice, pleaded passionately for death. He was already weary of his miserable life, which was just a burden to go on with. In his gentle but firm proposal, insulting us, he asked for an honourable death through an honourable sword – to end that wretched day. I opposed his request, trying to give life to someone who hated it. But finally the ministers overruled me, protesting that it was a matter of everyone’s safety; he was to be hanged to set an example to the Chieftains.

On a path up a mountain, near the camp, on a slope crossed by a great road leading directly to the Vale of Lincoya, with great solemnity and stupidity, the outrageous punishment was carried out. With his life, Galbarino paid the debt which in the opinion of many he did not owe. As there was no trained executioner in the vicinity, a new method of killing was adopted on this occasion. Each of the selected prisoners was given a length of rope, and told to choose a tree from which to hang himself of his own free will. Never did chattering soldiers, giving the signal of certain assault, with ladders, logs and pikes, climb any rampart as did those chieftains, climbing to the top of the highest trees, and hanging themselves from the high branches. But one of them, somewhat regretfully, with his nimble struggle and diligence already reduced to exhaustion, turned and asked permission to speak. This having been granted – with a disturbed voice and demeanour which moved the souls of the Christians, he made these contrite words.

“Brave nation, unconquered people, on whom the pinnacles of virtue are centred. Know that I am a chieftain, and a descendant of the oldest line of this land. I have no father, brother or other relations, as they have all been killed in the war. And as the succession falls on me, I beg you to treat me with clemency . . .”

He wanted to go on. But Galbarino, who was looking at him angrily, suddenly getting in his way and interrupted him, saying “You mean little rat! Besmircher of the pure lineage; how can you sink so low – to dumb fear of a quick death? Lousy blabberer, fickle traitor: do you really think it is a better destiny to live in misery than to die as a brave man should, follow your destiny, tolerable though adverse – to death at the end of your labours. You are trying to take a despicable half-measure.”

Scarcely had Galbarino finished speaking when the noble chief, repentant, made a slipknot round his neck and hung himself from a high branch. After him, the brave, stubborn barbarian went to the same death; that year, the sturdy oak trees bore new fruit. Now that the broken enemy had fled, leaving their unhappy path strewn with corpses, we reached without obstruction that wretched site where Valdivia had built the fort, and was then put to an infamous death. We quickly erected a wall around the campsite where the baggage, the friendly Indians and the survivors were more secure. From there we could range into enemy territory, free from restrictions, and try to negotiate bloodless submission.

* * *

One day I rode out into this land where (according to reliable intelligence) there was a war party in the vicinity. Going some distance ahead of my company, near a thicket and a high mountain, I heard an aged voice, saying "Where are you going? I have not gone!" I turned my face, and the reins, to where the voice had come from, and saw Fiton the magician, sitting on the trunk of a worm-eaten oak tree, leaning on his metalled stick; when he recognised me, I nimbly dismounted, greeting him brightly and politely.

"Certainly" he said, "it would be good to take legitimate vengeance on you, and on your people, who have perpetrated so much slaughter amongst us. But, although there is just cause to do so, since you have placed so much trust in me, I would not harm you; I would rather help you with what is right. It is the order of the heavens that this indomitable people should suffer its punishment. Formerly they had acted arrogantly, against God, and pride laid low the enemy. But although your happiness is now growing, it will be short-lived; in the long term, hard destiny will lead you to a fall.

"If Fortune, at your request, opens up the path to prosperity, there will be great labour and small profit for you today. I do not want to say any more; I want to return to my dwelling, which also holds, hidden from everyone, the door to this abode."

I marvelled at seeing him, and even more at his sinister prophesy; my horse, which I had hired from a Lebanese, wanted to keep him company. After many requests, the decrepit old man agreed to be our guide; we cut through the bush and scrubland until we reached the foot of the mountain. In a secret, hidden place where there was no crack or opening, he softly touched the hard rock with this powerful, twisted stick. There was an eerie noise, and then he entered, his hair standing on end, treading softly on the rocky ground. We entered a beautiful green meadow which delighted the eyes and the soul. There, in the form of a broad quadrangle, was a beautiful wall, never seen before, encrusted with jasper and porphyry; at the end of each side was an amethyst, and on the barred cedar doors, 1,000 delightful interlinking stories.

The door opened as the magician touched it with his wand, and we entered a spacious garden where it could be said that all the works of nature and artifice had been fused. The different kinds of foliage harmonised, making a beautiful circle, in the midst of which the streams sent

their murmuring currents. Nature does not produce so many flowers when the richest springtime comes, nor was there ever such a variety of colours as were to be found in that luxuriant garden; the fresh and fragrant odours, the birds and their harmonious melodies left the feelings of being possessed by an alien neglect, of being isolated from the rest of the world. I was in such a state of suspense that I would have lost my way if old Fiton had not called and beckoned me. He led me by the hand into a big alabaster vault which responded to the miraculous globe (as had happened before). I wanted to look at the globe, but did not dare to go near it without permission from the magician; but he, seeing my desires, wanting to satisfy me, drew a circle round me with his hand and began to signal me. He showed me the world, as if it were in its real form.

But what I saw in that illuminated sphere certainly merits a new canto – to recall everything. *So meanwhile, I ask your leave for me to refresh my enfeebled voice – pardon me if I leave at this point, as I cannot immediately go on.*

Canto XXVII

(This Canto contains descriptions of many provinces, mountains and cities, famous for their scenery and their association with wars. It also tells how the Spaniards erected a fort in the Valley of Tucapel, and how Don Alonso de Ercilla met the beautiful Glaura.)

It is right to praise brevity. We can see that a chat is more pleasurable when it is shorter and less affected. Although prolixity is sometimes useful it generally troubles, tries and annoys. You can go off the most savoury seasoned food when it is too cloying. I see myself to be in this danger and regret my long digression. How can one make such a detour and still be good to savour and hear? But although I desire to please the reader, I must reiterate that I was in the thick of the action; I cannot go very far with a single step, nor encapsulate a large amount of material in a small vessel. If, sir, I seem to have stopped in mid-tracks, do bear in mind the strange path I followed; masses of events went rushing past me. I will abbreviate when I can, and turning to our immediate concern, will tell you that the old Indian magician touched the globe with his hand.

It was of such a size that twenty people could not embrace its circle of light, here all things appeared clearly, in a distinct form; one could see the fields and cities, the activity and hubbub of the people, the birds and animals – from the largest mammals to the smallest insects. The magician told me: “Here nobody can distract us – without a single pointer remaining hidden, you will see a panorama of the universe. From North to South, from East to West, how the sea moves and the air embraces, rivers, mountains, lakes, seas; countries famous for their scenery and for wars.

“Look at the beginning of Asia at Caledonia, joined to the Bosphorus facing Thrace; Lydia, Caria, Licia and Laconia, Panfilia, Bithynia and Galacia, and joined to the Euxine Sea at Paphlagonia, the plain of Cappadocia and Pharnacia, and the famous river Euphrates which flows into the abundant Persian Gulf. There’s Syria; see the sign of the Promised Land, and happy Nazareth in Palestine, where Gabriel gave the message to Mary. See the sacred relics and the city demolished by Tito, where the author of life was mocked and betrayed to a shameful death.

“There’s the mighty Mediterranean, which separates Europe from Africa, and the Red Sea, whose waters Moses stopped with his rod. Look at the Gulf of Ormuz – and although in parts the land is not clear, you can make out the two Arabias, Felix and desert. See Persia and Carmania, bordering on Susiana on the western side, where tempered steel of the finest quality is forged – Drangiana and Gedrosia, which go as far as the Indian Ocean and the Orient – and following on from that, you will see torrid Aracosia. See within, and afar, the Ganges – and India, which extends to the Levant – Cathay and its city of Canton, which was founded on the Coast of the China Sea – China and the Moluccas – then see how the ocean extends from the East, and the famous Trapobana, last port of the Orient.

“Look at Hircania, Tartary and Albania, going as far as Trebizond, and other small regional states, tributaries and allies of Persia – there are the Iberians they call Georgians, and the poor scattered Circassians – the great sea flooded all the coast of their narrow land. See the abundant Cirrus which surrounds Iberia and Albania, and the Caucasus mountains, whose high peaks dominate a vast tract of land, the Kingdom of Colcos, so famous for the renowned island of Medea, where weary Jason came in search of the Crock of Gold. There’s great Armenia, memorable for its city of Tauris – and to the south the holy and venerable Soltania, totally ruined by the indefatigable fury of great Tamburlaine who, like a raging bolt from the sky, razed to the ground every city he attacked. Then the Tigris and Euphrates, rising in Mesopotamia, together flowing into the Persian Gulf – leaving Egypt and Syria on one side; see the Patria and the Medea which, twisting their curved coast, embraces at noon the Caspian Sea, also known as the Hercaneum, which extends in an oval shape to the Southern Hemisphere.

“Look at Assyria, and its famous city where the Confusion of Tongues originated – whose walls, a magnificent achievement, were constructed by Semiramis, mother of Nino, whom sudden death dispatched in Alexandria, cutting the threads of his life and destiny in his prime.

“Cast your eyes on Africa, to the massive realms of Prester John where, in the midst of the most insignificant and hidden places, Sheba stands resplendent with its buildings. It produces three crops of fruit in one year, three times its trees wither and grow again, at 22 degrees it is the highest point in the Southern Hemisphere.

“Turn to Georgia and its mountains, which exceed all others in height, its peaks always snow-capped, and below them, rough, rocky areas which form a great plateau, surrounded by dense scrubland and thickets, full of bears, pigs, lions and tigers, panthers, griffons and dragons.

“Those cragged places are now called The Mountains of the Moon, source of the famous fountains of the Nile and numerous rivers which, although they twist and separate their currents, they converge in a lake so vast that it feeds the rivers of three provinces. Gogia and Beguemedros to the East, and Dambaya to the West – on that side there are various inhabited islands, and all the broad circle is populated. There is the source of the Nile – then it gets swollen, separates at Gogia de Amara, and flows on without the restraint of other rivers. It reaches a rocky pass which narrows; there, with a thunderous voice, it falls as a cataract, then its banks widen, it flows on slow and stately, coasting the great island of Meroe, which contains three eminent kingdoms with differing laws and customs. Look at Cairo, which embraces three cities, and the royal palace of the Delta – the towers, gardens and estates in its spacious circle. See the pyramids and the vanity of the blind old people, for although their buildings proclaim their wealth, they are constructions of madness.

“See the depopulated expanses of the burning Libyan desert, Garamanta and the hot villages where the fierce black people live – the warlike troglodytes and those whom Gambia bathes in its current, the Pygmies, Biafrans and Guineans. Survey the broad sweep of the African coast, those singular ports and places from the mouth of the Nile to the Straits of Gibraltar,

Apollonia, Sirte and nearby Tripoli, Tunis – and together with them, if you look further, you will see some relics and ruins of the famous city of Carthage. Nearby are fertile, abundant Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica – and on the coast of Italy, the wild country which spreads out towards the West – illustrious Naples, then Rome – for centuries centre of the most powerful state on earth, and honoured by every nation thereafter. Look at Sienna and Florence in Tuscany, then, leaving the coast, go to Bologna – the island city and lordship – Padua, Mantua, Carmona and Placencia – Milan, the land and park of Pavia, which, in an important struggle, Charles captured from King Francis of France.

“Look at Alexandria, then – coming through Liguria, at proud Genoa and Saona; and crossing Piedmont and Savoy see Lyons, Toulouse and Bayonne, and following the wind, Burdeos, Poitiers, Orleans, Paris, Perona, Flanders, Brabant, Gelderland, Friesland, Holland, England, Scotland and Ireland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, until the Baltic Sea and its frozen coast, and to Switzerland, which is in the confines of Gotland – it is fortified against the sea. From there one can sail to Greenland, removed from the course of the sun and the life of the Zodiac: it has 6 months of night and 6 of day. Turn to Muscovy in the north, which many consider to be the last populated region on earth, defined on one side by the Riff Mountains, and extending from the fountains of Tanays, reaches Mount Hyperboreo and the frozen sea, surrounded by Sarmacia and Tartary, and running southwards to Russia.

“Cast your eyes on Livonia, Prussia, Lithuania, Samogocia, Podolia and Russia, Poland, Silesia and Germany, Bohemia, Austria and Hungary, Croatia, Moldavia, Transylvania, Valaquia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Macedonia, Greece, Candia, Cyprus, Rhodes and Judea – now to the West, and the roughness of old Vizcaya, from which it is sure that nobility extends – through all that has been discovered. Look at Bermeo surrounded by undergrowth – the head of Vizcaya, and above its gate, the wide walls of the ancestral home of Ercilla, founded before the town was. Look at Burgos, Logrono and Pamplona, and going down westwards, Saragossa, Valencia, Barcelona, then down to Leon and Galicia. You will see the famous cities of Lisbon, Coimbra and Salamanca – which specialises in all the sciences, and where Necromancy was once taught.

“See Valladolid which rose like a phoenix from the raging flames, Medina el Campo, famous for its fairs, Segovia and its famous bridge, and the woodland between there and Fonfrida, Pardo and Aranjuez, where nature bestowed all its flowers and verdure. Cast your eyes on that wild mountain country, somewhat set apart from the high harbour – although it is desolate and dangerous, it recently became populated. There the victorious King Philip, having subdued the French at San Quentin, will erect, as a testimony to his good intent, a Catholic monument.

“It will be a famous temple, incomparable in its grandeur and its sumptuous materials. Its construction, its religious goals and great riches will be universally celebrated. It will be an eternal, unforgettable edifice of immense beauty and majesty – the work of such a powerful king, a great Christian. Then Madrid, which good fortune has made to reach for the skies – and Toledo, founded on a strong site overlooking to golden Tagus – and the death which

threatened at Granada – the knives cutting so many throats. Seville – see the splendour of its temples, public buildings and houses, the concourse of people and grandeur, brought about by the distant Indies, which send two fleets a year, laden with gold and silver, pearls and other riches, and another two laden with merchandise, men, munitions and artillery. Cadiz, where the famous Hercules, to celebrate his prosperous destiny, erected his two pillars, writing *Nihil Ultra* in the marble. But Ferdinand, the glorious Catholic, breaking those boundaries, opened up the way to the New World, because he could not be confined in a single world.

“As you sail westward on the ocean, observe the Canary Islands; take a special look at Hierro where, through lack of water, birds, animals and people drink what has been distilled from a tree, in a broad, well-worked pile. See on the right hand side the Azores, which are occupied by the Portuguese, and going south-west, the first islands Columbus discovered, populated by strange races never seen before – the main ones being St Lucia, San Juan, Dominica, Santo Domingo, Cuba and Jamaica. See the narrow channel of the Bahamas and then, to the west, Florida – the useless country and broad coast which goes as far as New Spain – where Cortes, at no small cost, great effort and risk to life, through force of personality, vastly extended the boundaries of the Spanish Empire. Look at Ialisco and Mechoacan, famous for their medicinal roots: and Mexico, abundant and populous, which retains its old Indian name. Survey the populous, mountainous lands to the south, which extend to a point where the two oceans, on either side, slim down its coastline.

“See Panama and Nombre de Dios, which defend their narrow boundaries against two contrary seas, which angrily attempt to break up and flood the land – and the thunderous mountains of Capia, Cartagena and the lands which extend from Santa Maria and the Cape of Vela to the Lake and City of Venezuela. Bogota and Cartama, which border on Arma and Cali – an extensive stretch of land, Popayan, Pasto and Quito, which is near the temperate line of the Equinox; Puerto Viejo, where the rich emerald mine was found, and the lands which lie in the direction of Euro, Volturno and Mediodia.

“There’s Guayaquil with its dark, heavily-wooded mountains; Tumbez, Payta and its harbour – the first stage where the ships emerge; Piura, Loxa, la Zarza and Cordillera, where so many rivers rise and fall, irrigating 2,000 miles of ground which never gets any rainfall. Look at the great mountains, snowcapped beneath the Torrid Zone, the Mojos, Bracamoros and lands inhabited by wild people. Cajamarca and Trujillo, which were famous in the wars, and the famous Royal City, now seat of the Audiencias and the Viceroy. And to Guanuco, Guamange and the temperate region of Arequipa – the landmarks of ancient Cuzco, famous capital of the Incas and their slaves. Admire the Solstice, and pass on to the area south of the Tropic of Capricorn, populated by various strange people – see its rivers, lakes, valleys and mountains.

“Far to the south, there’s Chuquiabo, and then the very rich and extensive hill of Potosi, where the earth has amassed silver ore of high quality; one quintal of ore from the mine makes 23 kilos of fine silver. See the town of Plata, last before the rise on the left hand, and crossing the high mountains, Calchaqui, Pilcomayo and Tucuman, the river and the great plain, the remote fertile area which stretches to the fortress of Goboto. Turning from the

coast, see the hills which flank the Atacama desert – unpopulated, without birds, animals, grass or trees – see the Copayapos – tall Indians, famed as archers – Coquimbo, Mapacho, Cauquen and the rivers of Maule, Ytata and Biobio.

“Lo! The City of Penco and Arauca, that free and powerful state, Canete, La Imperial, and to the east the Villa Rica and the fiery volcano – Valdivia, Osorno, the lake and the famous islands – and following the coast southwards, Chiloe, Coronados and the strait where Magellan and co found the passage to the Pacific Ocean and sailed north-west to the Moluccas. See opposite the islands of Acaca and Zabu and Matan, which struggled to the end; Brunei, Bohol, Gilolo, Terrenate, Machian, Mutir, Badan, Tidore and Mate. See the fingers of land, so well covered that one can hardly make them out. These have never been explored, or trodden by foreign feet. They have always been concealed, sealed off – and will remain so until God allows them to be known – in order that their secrets can grow.

“And as you see, in true form the great circumference of the earth, and if you have time, you will get to understand the excellence of the celestial bodies, the mechanism and concourse of the spheres, the virtue and influence of the stars, various resolutions, natural and violent movements. But although for my part I want to leave you happy and contented, the day has been declining for some time, and you have a large distance to cover before you get to the site.”

And so the magician, keeping me company, put me on the right path, where I met my people, who were looking at me rather confusedly. We reached the camp site just as our friends were entering by the guard post. There we wasted time, trying to pacify the enemy, sometimes by being conciliatory, at others with threats and punishments – but without seeming too severe to the nearby villagers. But diligence was not enough, nor were half-measures, which always got hardened in their application. They sensed the importance of this position. Being established in the land, it was agreed on sound advice to maintain the fort.

In preparation for the harm expected to ensue from the lack of some provisions (although it was a fertile and abundant year – the fields were full of beans and cabbages), I joined Don Miguel de Velasco and Avendano, with those who had assembled at that point. I formed an escort, and together we took the right way to Cauten. Although at some risk, without any contrast to the previous ones, we passed the danger points and reached the approach to the Imperial City. There we ingratiated the inhabitants with words of friendship – not only graciously distributing food, but also offering land and life.

And so, happy – with no hint of war, with bread, fruit, seeds and cattle, we turned the area into one of peaceful, transformed Indians. On reaching the high mountains we found an escort of soldiers who had come to protect our precious lives. The sun, already set, poured its rays on the sea, the night giving relief to our men – weighed down as they were with fatigue from their exertions. But come the break of dawn, alert, they began to march with a great noise, their baggage and cattle all surrounded by the escort.

I was going with the advance guard to the midst of some wild, uneven country when I saw running across it a woman who looked distraught. Spurring on my horse, I caught up with her. *To find out what happens then, read the next canto.*

Canto XXVIII

(Glaura tells of her misfortunes and the reason for her arrival. The Araucanians attack the Spanish in the ravine of Puren; there follows a bitter fight. The enemy plunder the baggage; they retire, happy though routed.)

Those who lead free and peaceful lives should be prudent, for a fall is so much more damaging when it has not been in any way anticipated. So many times we have seen happy lots transformed into misery, liberties into subjection and adversity following prosperity. But Fortune is so fickle, so uncertain – sometimes showing itself to be a friend; no sooner does she bring good to our door than the evil inside it wears us out. We know for sure that there has never been anything good from which no evil follows; one can only ask for it not to be vindictive, and that any harm it brings in its train be small.

I who have suffered its stab wounds feel that happiness should be partly feared; happy times pass in a moment, but sadness always lasts until death. And since I have come to my next canto, let us consider the barbarian woman, who on my reflection, grew in substance and in her demeanour showed herself to be a person of lineage. She was a big girl: well formed, with a happy face and sparkling eyes, perfect nose, red lips, her teeth like fine coral, big breasted, with lovely hands, graceful arms, her beauty radiating a natural elegance and grace.

I wanted to understand why she had come alone through this rough terrain – with more security than her beautiful face and rare gentleness promised. I reassured her against the fear she was feeling. Giving a sigh, which would turn the hardest beast to tenderness, she stated her case thus:

“I do not know whether to complain of my wretchedness or to thank the Fates for my destiny; they have opened the gate and given me entry to a place where I can meet my death. But if you want to know the terrible story and my dire grief, I beg you to pay attention, although my little sentiments and expressions insult it.

“My name is Glaura, born in the strong hour. I am the daughter of good Chief Quilacura, of the blood of Friso, rich in estates and material assets but poor in happiness; respected and waited on by many because of my lineage and vain beauty – but alas! Would I had been a poor simple cowgirl! I lived happily in my father’s house as an only heiress; his every thought, his only happiness was to give me everything I wanted. My will and my orders were obeyed like inviolable laws, and I never had difficulty with anything.

“But soon the jealous tyrant, Love, disturber of happiness, gave my land and home to Fresolano, a strong, spirited young man – elder brother of my unhappy father and more of a friend than a parent. The decisions were left to him; I had no share in them. As a caring friend my father ordered me to give myself to him and so I, with openness and great concern, wishing to please my father, attempted to obey his wishes. But then he whose fidelity was

wavering ruined the plan, corrupted the friendship, forsook common sense and took an illicit path. That was the treatment I received; that was my misadventure, which I tell you is more of a reality than badly judged beauty: ungrateful for my friend's hospitality, paying little heed to my debts, I began to love, and to look for some means to reward his concern.

"Many times I saw his pain revealed through overt signs and evasions; I knew that his intentions overstepped the limits of honesty. But the one through whom I am suffering now himself suffered misery then – finally he had sunk so low that he could not speak badly of evil. I found him with his deluded eyes, sighing 1,000 times; at other times he timidly tried to express his daring proposals – and forestalling a dangerous incident with gravity and honesty (that which most restrains daring), he deactivated his steely monster. He had only been staying with me for a day; fearful of some attack, he got down on his knees before me, with great disturbance and embarrassment, trembling as he told me: 'Lady, you well know that since the joyous day of my arrival here I have borne a love which will last to the end of my sorry, wretched life. I need to know if you will be served by it – being you. I know of nothing else that could make me so happy.' Seeing that he was set on some violence and disrespect, I cunningly went to one side, and without any show of caution, told him from a distance: 'Oh wicked one! Incestuous, disloyal, ungrateful corrupter of sworn friendship and the law of conserving parenthood.' I was saying these and other things, to express my irritation, when in a sudden, noisy assault, a Christian squadron attacked us; advancing in close formation, they surrounded our old house. In my presence, Fresolano jumped up to make due and just resistance, saying 'O proud, hardened tigress, so callous to human beings: turn now, stop being the homicide; leave that to the Christians. You will see that life ends here; let it not be at your hands, but at theirs. Although such a death is less honourable, at least it will be more holy.'

"And so, furious, without looking at anybody, he rushed into the midst of the armed men, where a bullet pierced his bare, ardent breast; he fell, crying in a desperate voice: 'Glaura, Glaura – at last, receive my spirit, weary of giving life to this wretched body.' My father arrived in the midst of this fracas, armed only with tenacity and confidence. But then he was wounded in the side by a furious lance; his body fell, drained of blood, and I saw my fortune and misfortune through the shutter of a false door; I stopped looking as more of them died.

"After running in panic hither and thither, I went off to hide in a mountain, trusting myself to luck, which has always been my safeguard against any precipice, and so, without any common sense or sense of direction, I tried to move. But such was my state of terror that – however fast I ran, I did not seem to move. But, as often happens when one is fleeing danger and harm – one finds oneself on a path which seizes us and makes our perils overflow. So for me – wretched as I was, it happened that in my attempt to save my worthless life, I careered from one disastrous episode to another, getting into ever more crises, ever more danger. Pathetically I ran on through thorns, brambles and thistles, scurrying here and there, my eyes wide open at each step – when I saw, coming out of some trees, two black men laden with loot – as soon as they saw me they attacked this miserable prisoner. They quickly stripped me; I thought nothing of losing my clothing and my life. My honour, my precious chastity

was on the point of being lost, but my cries and complaints were so powerful that they moved even the plants to pity and piety.

“Heaven treated me with clemency, guiding Cariolan to my cries. Then seeing the enormity of the act and the arrogance of those rapist enemies, he ran with blessed diligence, saying ‘Dogs! Barbarians! Leave this girl alone, or you will lose your lives.’ The two of them set upon him but he, drawing his bow, fired an arrow which pierced the first of them up to its flight feathers; then he took two paces to the right and despatched the second arrow with such power and skill that it penetrated its target’s brutal heart. One fell dead, the other, badly wounded, closed with Cariolan, furiously and stubbornly. But heroic Cariolan was experienced in the art of combat. Although the black man was big and well-built Cariolan, helped by his skill and strength, lifting him up to the sky in his arms, pierced him with swords on the ground.

“Taking a sharpened dagger to finish off the job, he stabbed the black man three times in his naked belly and flank, drawing his blood. Through that, his soul was despatched and Cariolan freed from that affront; he came to me graciously, asking my forgiveness for the delay. I won’t go into all the reasons here (making love to me was his duty too) – fearful to go into opinions, which is a slight to honour and stain on the character. To forestall gossip, and show myself grateful for the help I had then received, I took him for my guard and my husband. Fearing that people would hear, we headed for the mountains, where there is no trace or sign of life. For a long time we were lost, but at the end of the day we reached the river of Lauquen where came a squadron of Christians with ten Indian prisoners. They suddenly spotted us, and then Fate turned on us as they ran after us, crying loudly ‘Wait! Stop!’ – but my new husband, fearing more for my dishonour than his own death, told me to hide in the thicket, while he would detain them by dying.

“Then fear intense enough to transform a weak, reticent woman, persuaded me to put my own skin before horrendous death and esteemed life. So, like a coward, timid, inconstant, who submitted to the first attacks, I took the roughest path away. I hid in the hollow of a tree trunk, covered with brambles and undergrowth – numb and almost breathless with fear; from there I heard a great noise thundering round the thicket, of swords, lances and mobs savagely fighting. Little by little, this noise died down; my sense of obligation was already warming up my fear-frozen blood – considering the evil and betrayal I had committed by not standing by my husband to face one danger, one death, one fortune.

“I departed from there, an abomination unto the Lord who had left life buried there. I ran to the river, where I looked foolish; but when I saw no trace of him, nor any way of calling him, lone and distressed as I was. You can imagine how I felt – as it was certain I could not escape prison or death.

“Furiously, in vain, I raised my voice, crying to the deaf, unjust, crude sky, asking ‘Where is my Cariolano?’ There was only dead silence in reply. I entered the thicket, then ran across the plain; my agonising pain, gnawing ever more furiously at my entrails, did not give me a

moment's rest. I do not want to bore you, or burden myself by describing the nausea I felt, not knowing what to do, now how to direct my frenetic feelings. I thought of killing myself, but because of my stupidity and the evil inside me, that pain was not strong enough to make me want to quit my life. In the grip of such agony and confusion, assailed by doubts and conflicting forces, I was finally resolved to end it all. But still my pain did not despatch me. By night I headed for the Spanish camp, but I kept well hidden from it, for the sake of my honour, for which my desperate situation and great misfortune did little to reassure me.

"And noticing that these people had passed Cauten, also that they had inevitably returned to this narrow stretch, I wanted to come in a different guise – thinking that among so many, in disguise, there would be some news, or trace or sign of my fortune changing its course.

"What remedy remained to me – already a captive, subject to alien orders and wills, except to take the greater punishment – though death does not come, why is it good? But although the cruel heavens wanted me to live, I was by now suffering enough agony to finish me off, although my situation was strong. Nobody chooses their time of dying."

So as this beautiful young woman was telling me of her misadventures a great barbarian ambush, lurking on both sides, raised a sudden cry to the heavens, blocking the passes and escape routes; Indians were springing up as if they had been born from the grasses. Then there came a friendly Indian, of no more than a month's standing, but skilful in war. He told me: "Sir; head for the river so that I can save you; it is madness to think of resisting this host which has surged down from the mountains. You can well trust me to die in order to help you escape."

Turning my face to thank him for his offer, I saw Glaura going for him with no caution, saying "Oh great God! What is it that I see? Will you be my sweet husband? Oh, my life! I will take you in my arms. I can hardly believe it: am I dreaming, or am I deranged? Such happiness cannot be real!" I was astonished at this occurrence, happy to be admired, and to see Glaura's wretched lament turned into happy success. Being so pressed for time, and not having leeway to fulfil or complete this, I said "All I can do it to grant you liberty; therefore I do so."

Without any other offer or promise I spurred my horse on. But although the Indians pursued me I want you to know, sir, that I was the first – and when, at the entry to the dense wood, Cariolano came to be my prisoner – fearing for his life, he left Glaura hidden in a tree trunk.

"Sir: know that I came with some friends and soldiers who had gone all day in search of rebellious enemies. But when I had already joined our men with ten tied-up prisoners in two, at the end of the plain, the beginning of the mountain, we discovered we were near Cariolano. All the people closed in on him, thinking that fear would lend him wings, but with great disdain and boldness, he escaped from encirclement. He managed deftly to wound Francisco Osorio and Acebedo, with a dagger which he had concealed under his cloak. Such was the nimble artistry of the audacious Araucanian that there was no part of the troop to which he

left a clear space on the plain, jumping round hither and thither, some blows striking wide of his body, others parried by his cloak and dagger. I, who did not want to see that battle but was fascinated by the spirited young man, threw myself into the midst of the action, saying “away, gentlemen; go to one side. It is not right that this young hero should die. Before his time comes, he should be rewarded; killing him now would not be courage, but villainy.”

They all held back, seeing that they would be perpetrating an infamous act. But the Indian struggled on as if fate wanted to prolong his life. Finally, sheathing his dagger, he was taken over by courtesy – turning to me and saying “What does it matter to you if my life is long or short? But my worthy work and human willpower will be recognised. My intentions are worthy, although they could be taken as impious and inhuman. For whoever has had a miserable life an early death cannot be bad; so by not killing me you can create great misery. But because you do not tell me, I deny you having spared my life; I put myself in your power and accept my miserable fate.”

Having said that he threw away his dagger. The one who had been indomitable became tame, always wanting to be with me, not as a servant, but more as a friend. The bellicose hubbub of arms and voices resounded. Some went running up the mountain; others asked for help. The path was narrow; being unable to go forwards or backwards, they blocked the way – with baggage, prisoners and loot.

The route goes directly to Puren, as far as the entrance to the state. Then it goes obliquely for a great distance, sandwiched between two craggy hills – it gets so tight that one can scarcely walk along it two by two, and a stream flowing beside it makes it narrower still. Also, at intervals in parts of the path, some turned around, making a confused whirlpool, taking reprisals for the tempest of shots. Their fine courage turned their enemies to pulp – denting shields, breastplates, helmets amidst a buzzing fury of boulders, lances, dents, arrows and slings. Some fell to the ground with head wounds, unable to sustain a strong position; others, beaten like frogs and toads, could not move. Some on all fours, others broken-backed, dragged themselves along, seeking refuge in some recess or hollow near the path, which would protect them from the turmoil.

In this narrow pass the enemy had assembled their men and munitions. They had an advantage over our soldiers with the rocky slope. I will bear witness that the hail of stones was so thick and fast that the hill itself seemed to be falling to pieces. Imagine an angry sky covered in thick, menacing clouds, wanting to sink and ruin the ground, laden with rays, stones and storms, birds in mid-flight; people, wild animals and cattle running here and there, lost, looking for their shelters and haunts.

And so the Spaniards, pinned down by this furious hail and tempest – badly wounded, looked everywhere for trees or cavernous rocks. Having found them, and defended their positions, they rallied with renewed efforts, and hope for victory and vengeance. From there, with their customary speed and their targets in view, they began to deliver a shower of missiles, rapidly

knocking many down. And after this barrage, bodies and rocks came hurtling down with such intensity that even the dead could inflict terrible damage.

So the struggle went on in this narrow space, and no less on the other side where more voices resounded. The Indians had rebelled, reacted so strongly that they plundered the baggage train, wreaking havoc among the guards and servants. Some ran up the high hill, with meat, fish, bread and fruit; others, laden with bottles and packages, ran without embarrassment or grief. High and low, left and right, the looting went on – like a flock of pigeons in springtime devouring the scattered seeds.

Seeing that we had been soundly defeated by the great force that surged against us, we had to take the final measure to save our lives – so, suddenly bursting into the midst of the congested path, we reached a point where ten soldiers were cornered in a hollow of the mountains. The battle was then going badly for both sides. But having reached the top of the hill, victory was ours – for all of those below were engrossed in looting, and the shock of seeing us on high was enough to defeat them.

Resolved to die in action, all eleven joined together as one unit. We spurred our horses uphill, each man riding high in the saddle; although the hill was steep, we reached the desired crest, covered in thick scrub and trees. When the horses could go no further, we all dismounted. Sweating and breathless, scarcely able to move, we flanked it, and without delay or obstruction, we gained the side where there were the most Indians. We scaled a cliff, where we had them in our sights, and gave them a barrage of arquebuses and stones. I promise you that although we scored many hits, the sudden fear our attack induced was more effective against them. So as they milled around in their tight spot, it seemed to them that heaven and earth were moving against them; they saw war – above and below.

With spirited confidence some came to our aid, bitter and eager for vengeance. They increased the damage and instilled so much fear that the enemy lost hope. Some began to retreat, fleeing – fleet of foot, to escape with their clothing and their lives. Some fled here, some there – laden with baggage or loot – some drove the cattle through the densest thickets. Some, dishonest from hunger and greed, waited to carry off more. The burden of that wanton desire cost the lives of over ten of them.

And so the party ended, leaving the plundered to suffer, and the winners to celebrate victory and honour with trumpets, clarinets and drums. Marching to their sound, with good guards and runners, we, badly wounded, reached camp, where we were greeted by a gun salute.

The barbarians beat a hasty retreat up a rugged crag and a thickly wooded mountain, consoled by their delicious loot – their success – and there they confronted their general, who knew the disorder and excess which victory had brought to the enemy. The general punished some to set an example. And having joined the remnants of the destroyed camp in Talcamavida, to discuss affairs of state, he called the top people, and having gone through the main issues – he freely told them everything – *which you can read all about in the next instalment.*

Canto XXIX

(The Araucanians hold another Council where they consider burning their estates. Tucapel asks to hold the contest with Rengo, which had been postponed. Bravely and spiritedly, the two fight in the stockade.)

Oh what strength has the love of our country! How it inspires us, chivvies into action all that we have put off. It facilitates all danger and death. We leave father, son and wife when we go to serve our country – we treat it as our greater parent. The famous exploits of men of old leave ample evidence of this – those who have put their swords into their own entrails, and the pens of famous writers who have extended their fame, Mario, Casio, Filon, Cosdro Ateniense Regulo, Agesilao and Uticense. The Araucanian people are worthy of mention here, as they made such a show of courage and spirit, baring their throats to the knives for the love of their country; neither the rigours of Fate nor the heavy blows of Fortune could dent their resolve.

Having in only three months lost four important battles, they were not demoralised or struck down but stood with indefatigable courage and constancy, as you heard before, calling for another assault. But Caupolicán took things in hand and said: “Oh Holy Senate; we agree that we are determined to conquer or die, and trust in our brave arms as the ultimate remedy. Let us burn the houses, clothing and superfluous furniture. If we have to die, it is excess baggage. If we destroy it, it can contribute to our later victory. It is right and proper that we understand what is to be gained from this. It is not good to reach an agreement at this assembly when honour has no place in it; nor is it right that any soldier agrees to try more than he can reasonably be expected to achieve – nor that his ardent will should be damped by love of home and estates. Whoever wants to disengage from this conflict must think there is no more honour, land or life remaining to leave to the enemy. Our well-known prowess in arms will be our salvation and our true friend; its sole function is to destroy the foe.”

Having heard this, the chiefs, bewildered, left without speaking. Some of them, disturbed, arched their eyebrows, and looked at each other. But then, breaking silence, they discussed it, emphasizing so many points they found in its favour. And so brave Ongolmo, not wanting anyone to be ahead of him, raised his voice, saying they should get to work. After him came Puren, swearing that he would not rest until he saw unequivocally his country – secure in peace and liberty. Lincoya and Caniomangue were not slow to swear the decree, fervently promising to do everything possible. Rengo and Gualemo and the other proud chieftains – Talcaguan, Lemolemo and Orompello, also offered themselves – and then good Colocolo joined them. Having declared their resolve on what we have discussed, after the excitement and the heavy discussion had subsided, Tucapel, who had kept quiet and attentive, rose to his feet and raised his ardent voice (he never spoke softly), saying:

“Captains: I will be the first to support the justice of what the General proposes – I want to give it all I’ve got – as for the rest I refer to my arm. If I keep it going for a month at full

strength, I can then gather the greatest and best share – to my satisfaction. And if any miserable wretch does not accept what is justly asked of him, he will be considered an enemy of the country, and excluded from the military order; there can be no half-measures, since the struggle is for our land and our liberty. I am determined to follow your votes and opinions, although it comes at a time of crisis which activates new causes and bones of contention. Stimulated by natural dignity and other legitimate motivations, I cannot in any way separate one piece of business from the rest.

“You will remember the contest which Rengo and I postponed, as well as that which took place with his uncle, who was desperate to die. In view of that insult, that outrage to my honour, which ever more weighs down on me, I want, with more ado, to fulfil my obligation and desire. Rengo has gained glory among all the people, so now it is a matter of his entering the stockade with me. He has proudly delayed this – but I, tired of waiting, since each opportunity was messed up, ask that our field be set – as it is not good that my credit should suffer.

“That rash old man Peteguelen strikes me as being deceitful. He threw himself to his death among so many people to dignify his decease – and so escaped me, who was pure terror and nothing else – if he had really been moved by ambition for glory he would have wanted death at my hands. Diligent and cautious, Rengo also went into the thick of the enemy, looking for some obstruction or honourable excuse from keeping his promise, and beneath a show of animosity, tried to leave one-armed or crippled and unfit for combat, he could still be proud of having challenged me.”

So spoke the arrogant barbarian: then furious Rengo, ablaze, heedless, came forward, saying “I want a fight – none of your blustering ruffles me; the weapons – not vain boasts, will do the talking”.

He would have attacked Tucapel – but just at that point Caupolicán arrived, put himself between them and stopped them short, with stern demeanour and a grave gesture – reprimanding them for their foolishness. To resolve the conflict between them, he granted Tucapel’s request.

It took four days to prepare the famous square for the contest. There arose much controversy among the happy people about the uncertain outcome; some staked clothing, some – livestock, others – farmland, some granaries – whilst those who did not want to win staked their worn-out women. In the open area, they constructed, with planks, a platform where the two indomitable armed men went into hand-to-hand combat – proclaiming the conditions, according to Araucanian custom, in order that everything was clear, and that nobody could claim ignorance. Having reached the site at daybreak, anticipating a great spectacle, the noisy crowd began to surround the stockade. The surrounding area was so tightly packed that there was no tree, floor, window or roof whose view was not blocked by people. The fiery, lazy sun had scarcely risen from the East when on one side the warlike Tucapel appeared –

making a lot of noise. From the other side, no less proudly, came the gallant Rengo – with slow, deliberate steps and a show of arrogance.

Their robust bodies were adorned with strong double breastplates, armbands and sallets, covered down to the insteps of their armoured feet. They bore short maces ribbed with steel, shields of smelted metal, and on each man's left side, tight-fitting a broad, curved and decorated cutlass. Imagine the square, sir – its doors like the palisade of a jousting space, through which one Mars and another came in a broad circle and detour. Then with flamboyant but gentle grace, each one retired to his corner. When the sponsors had been duly acknowledged (as is the custom in such contests), and any doubts or signs of caution had been dispelled, on hearing the trumped (which stole the colour from more than one gesture), the spectators ceased their bustle and din.

Then the two famous combatants who, looking bizarre and angry, had been awaiting the tardy signal, moved with measured tread to combat – and simultaneously swinging their valiant arms, struck each other such blows that each one had his head bowed down on his breast. In the second round, although exhausted, they redoubled their efforts. If there had not been counter-moves, the contest would have gone on into a third round.

Who could do justice to these savage warriors, in trying to describe their fury – seeing the world's courage and flaming rage concentrated in them! Tucapel was struck by a heavy blow above his shield, in the middle of his forehead; for a while he was stunned – his mind and senses suspended. Rengo attacked again, but the effect was different. The second blow awoke Tucapel from the dreams of the first. No serpent was so venomous when defending its young in its nest as was that furious barbarian, more conscious of honour than of pain. At one moment far from rabid rage, moved by devilish pride, then – in a flash, unloading his mace and fury together on intrepid Rengo – who reacted instantly to this accelerated energy, so that the mighty blow from the ironed mace hit thin air: though furious it was sustainable. But Rengo's strength turned into delirium. I think that took him over; that, in my opinion, was what ended the combat. Although he had dodged the blow, the Araucanian was a bit faint. At last, no longer able to sustain the heavy load, put one hand on the ground. But seeing there was no small danger from his adversary – his confidence restored and his mace at the ready, he made the heavier riposte. The pride of those two, their exceptional valour, their judgment, art and skill, their entrances, wounds and feints were so admirable! In my dumbness I fear that I cannot fully describe that most singular battle ever to have taken place between barbarians. The fiery contest went back and forth, thick and fast – even the lightest blow could not fail to bruise flesh or break bones – the air, nearby and far away, reverberated with the sounds of struggle and heavy breath, almost as if a big army was approaching.

Mighty Rengo struck a blow at Tucapel, denting his sallet, so that he saw stars all over the ground, and was deafened. But he rallied, blaspheming to heaven, and strengthened by that power, wounded Rengo at lightning speed, before he could change his direction. The heavy blow fell so hard on Rengo's head that everyone thought he was dead. He was unconscious for a long time but then, aroused by peril and pain, he straightened his dented shield and

attacked Tucapel so furiously that his mace broke in two at the handle. Seeing this happen, Tucapel contemptuously threw his mace on the ground, taking in hand the hefty sword, raising it on high, he closed in again; but Rengo, deftly moving to one side, made sure the blow was struck in vain. The sword hit the ground, and much of it was buried. Because of this obstruction, Tucapel was wounded in the side; his left armlet, with a chunk of flesh, fell down. Unable to parry the blow, Tucapel was pierced by the great sharp knife. Covered by his shield, Rengo struck a heavy blow which broke Tucapel's helmet in two, shattering his crest and spilling his brains out. The barbarian remained faint and twitched on the ground. But the effort and the burning pain conquered his grief. He did not retire from this round before thinking of taking crude vengeance. And so, burning with rage, exasperated by the new attack, he struck, with immense force, a backward blow, which penetrating his strong armour, sliced his enemy into two at the waist.

It went so far inside that he could not get away from his enemy. So, throwing away his broken shield, Rengo attacked with his bare arms. Tucapel, who was strong and muscular, struck at the same time – flexing his arms as if he were chopping down a sturdy old oak tree. He got to grips with Rengo, on whom nobody had the edge in courage – of ten, of six, of two – he was the one of the greatest strength and agility. Coming in sight of the prizes each one, stretching strength and courage to the uttermost, struggled to prevail. So wrestling breast to breast, they made furious movements, stretching their hard arms so much that they could barely draw breath. Summoning up new strength, each one aspired to victory, each one wanting to force the other down onto the ground. It was certainly a frightful spectacle to see them so fiercely interlocked, bloodstained, with copious sweat inflaming their faces and eyes – their breath heavy, panting and whimpering, without letting up all day, nor with one gaining the advantage.

But Tucapel, feeling vicious, weak and outraged, ploughed through the mob, laying in strongly – left and right. Rengo, with great skill and shrewdness, kept cool, calm and collected, and sustained a good measure of hope. Coming to grips again, Rengo tried to disable his adversary's right foot, but drawing back in time, Tucapel held it on the ground, over Rengo's breast, and clasping him between his hard muscles, shook and held him so tightly in that strong embrace that he could neither touch the ground nor take a breath. Thinking in that way he could easily finish the contest Rengo, so skilful and brave, trod the ground with strong steps. Raging, impatient, he made a sharp swerve, his hands clutching what he had seized in the hard struggle.

For some time Tucapel was ablaze, trying feints on both sides, while Rengo, with all the strength that he could summon, thrust him down on his knees. Both ran quickly to arms, shattering each other's shields with a tempest of heavy blows, stronger and more furious than at the start. The onlookers admired this display of tenacity and courage, seeing them wounded in a thousand places, their blood soaking the ground, their armour and shields destroyed –

there was nothing to do but try and leave one person dead, although it was more likely that two would die.

Rengo wounded Tucapel, piercing his armour through the side; although it was reinforced by big rings, Rengo penetrated it as if it were soft leather. He did not leave the sword there; with a double stroke he penetrated the flesh to the bone. One could never imagine a heart so calm as not to miss a beat on seeing the horrendous face of that outraged barbarian who, already possessed by an infernal fury, threw his broken shield far away and raised his sword so fiercely that nobody nearby felt safe from it.

“Look out Rengo! Duck; defend yourself!” With accelerated rigour and fury came the most intrepid sweep ever made by a barbarian sword. But whoever is waiting for the end of this contest must forgive me for breaking off the story at this point – because I believe that I am waiting for it – with greater desire.

End of Part II

The Third Part of the Araucana

Canto XXX

(This Canto describes the end of the combat between Tucapel and Rengo, also what happened between Pran the Araucanian, and Andresillo, tenant of the Spaniards – a friendly Indian.)

Any challenge is to be condemned by Divine Law and Natural Right when it is not conducive to the common good and universal profit, especially when it is not done merely for private and personal ends, but with full public authority and recognition – that is what justifies the arms doomed in individual combats and duels.

Many say that challenges are sanctified by right and custom. They claim that anger should be nurtured as intrinsic to humanity and free will, but still subject to the restraints and authority of reason, to ensure that the demands of justice are not exceeded.

The Prophet gives us an example; sometimes we can be angry with such temperance and self-discipline that we do not overstep the mark. But when we leave reason and humanity out of the equation there is little difference between an angry sane man and a lunatic. Although we are motivated by natural impulses and the will is activated by the intervention of anger, its execution – the act, or fight, is to be censored and condemned – when that passion which motivates it is not put under the yoke of reason. There, on reflection, anger is clearly fitting and natural for men – insofar as it obeys reason. When it is harnessed to the common cause the contestant, at the right time, one can use it against the champion as he would use it against a legitimate enemy. But if it is only for a show of strength or bravado – out of boastfulness, if it is just to gain praise or stems from rancour or hatred – just for the sake of a fight, or to try out new weapons – it is an unjust conflict, and should be forbidden *even if it is customary practice*. We have proof of this in the conflict between Rengo and Tucapel who – fighting out of pure presumption and vainglory, tore each other to pieces like wild animals – striving for death with inhuman energy: the two of them were as near to mortality as their quarrel was far from justice.

I will say that traditional combats were corrupted as they became time-honoured. They are condemned by every law and prohibited in military practice, except in some special cases where it is decided that is the only way to resolve a grievance. That is something very important to shoulder, as we shall now see:

It ceased indecisively; if I had had my weapon raised to strike at Tucapel, I would have felt guilty and castigated myself for having left him for so long. But returning to the story – you heard me yelling at seething Rengo who was bringing down his sword, guided by his

muscular arm. The two clashed together, but I could not hear the sound of the impact. He raised his shield with both hands, his face radiating beneath. The sharp blade did not stop with him, nor could the well-tempered shield block its path; he was cut from top to toe, opening up a fountain of blood.

He remained unconscious for a long time, then got back on his feet with difficulty. Having fainted he was still hesitant, tottering. But as he turned, heartfelt, seeing the position he was in, he closed with Tucapel, who was on the point of beating him to the ground. Finding him so near and so broken down, the one who had messed him up so much, used such force against him, was now thrown off his feet; but turning to rally, seeing his foe was so stubborn, flexed his strong, knotty arms, thinking to cut Tucapel into a thousand pieces.

With measureless strength he parried, shook and made rings around his foe. But Rengo, having pulled himself together, applied his skill. Neither loss of blood – poured out there, nor the hypertension of the fight diminished their ardour – rather did the fury grow. Rengo made a turn, seizing Tucapel from the right – with arms tightened, he thrust his sturdy breast upon him. So intense was the struggle on both sides that neither could escape. Through, and in spite of, their efforts, they both lurched to the ground, as if they were falling walls or turrets.

But with renewed rage and fire, they began to knock each other about – then rubbed fistfuls of earth into each other, so much that finally neither of them could see. Unable to use their weapons they went for each other with eyes and teeth. So they struggled on, fierce, bloodstained and furious, alternating above and below, rasping wheezes resonating from their tight breasts. There was never an idle moment. They did not relax their efforts, just showed renewed strength in their protracted combat.

Three hours had already passed; the two heroes, equal in strength, began to flag and show signs of mortality, with their last strength ebbing away. Without either being able to prevail, they ended up motionless, looking more dead than alive. They were right out of joint, drained of blood, breath and life, breasts heaving, covered in dust and bloodied sweat, their arms and feet pinned down – though one could see that Tucapel had the harder struggle to pick himself up. He held down his foe, with his right foot and right arm thrown over him; he was judged by his friends to be the victor, and although that is much disputed today, neither of them rallied; only their heavy breathing and heartbeats showed that they were still alive.

Great Caupolicán, presiding as the judge of the contest, saw the gravity of the situation and entered the stockade. Without a moment's hesitation, seeing that they had hardly any blood or life left, ordered each one to be hoisted on a litter by twelve of the most illustrious elders. Followed by the nobles and the leading people, each one was borne to a tent, where they were treated to remedies. The flow of blood was staunched; so generous was the care lavished on them that they recovered in a trice.

After the crisis period had passed, both of them improved – although Tucapel did not stop trying to get back into action. But the long-suffering General gradually tempered down his

anger. Peace was established between Rengo and Tucapel. It was solemnly agreed that they would no longer dwell on the past nor under any circumstances, for any cause, be it public or private – could they box, wrestle, or verbally attack one another. From then on they would act with mutual generosity, as friends, helping each other out in times of danger. Having accepted this, the two famous men affirmed their bond by eating and drinking together amidst a celebration and great applause from the people.

So let us leave them in harmony; I now need to turn to the bank of that river which changes name with every locality it flows through. Much had gone missing from our beleaguered camp; let us pick up this thread after the final point of the battle. Having won a Pyrrhic victory we assembled to return to the fort which was some distance away. Soon after that we had some encounters – not without their cost in blood and toil. I'll get on to this now so as not to keep you in suspense.

I will pass over that other battle, so hard fought and with such heavy casualties on both sides. It is another writer's job to describe this in full detail. Considering that the fort had enough food and munitions for two months, it seemed then appropriate to leave for the captain at Reinoso.

Ravaged by the past wars, the other cities called us. Their laws, shelved and seemingly powerless, cried out to us from afar. Everything was unhinged; anarchy ruled, the realm was in danger of collapse through lack of government. But seeing that the area was so prosperous, so fertile, an ample base for a worthy people, at a very important time and place, I will speak further of the layout of the city; although its principles and foundations were sound, it subsequently changed its name and location.

Leaving crack soldiers behind us as a rearguard, we ventured into the forbidden territory in full battle order, and crossing the Puren Sierra we safely reached the Imperial, where all our people were lodged. Then, on arrival, the Governor revived the suppressed laws, reforming the judiciary and its customs, which had been corrupted in those turbulent times. Renouncing the excess and disorder introduced by rampant greed, he made a new deal to set a good example to the rest.

We had scarcely tended the bodies, so hungry and exhausted, when we got the news that the whole country had been overturned, the peace treaty broken. Seeing our force divided, they joined together with the goal of wiping out every single soldier in our garrison. Then, having prepared about thirty men from those whom we found fittest, we made heavy, desperate tracks across the mountain fastness of Tiru. Beset by several surprise attacks, we struggled on without sleeping day or night, until we reached the Spanish camp. There our men had subdued that area which had recently rebelled. By chance they had been tipped off about the conspiracy. Being most grateful for this, they helped us out unhesitatingly and told us everything that had happened, as follows:

The Araucanian army, understanding that it was running out of luck, and that Caupolicán was

losing prestige, murmured in secret about their odious captain, saying that the war should go on – to preserve the dignity of the nation. But they did not speak with such powerful voices and courage that the freest and bravest would not fear. They feared the smallest edict and command. The threatened punishment was so great that no one dared to criticise the orders given to them; they felt such awe and respect. But he prudently considered the inexorable turn of destiny and the restiveness of his people, now seeing him in his wretched state – knowing that good fortune always crosses the path of fickle fate, and that one disaster after another, daily, cools the most ardent devotion. He wished to give another stick to Fortune, which had turned against him and offered him no remedy to restore his credit. He decided on one of many possible courses of action, before he communicated his intention to quickly assemble arms and munitions. Leaving no room for delay, nor time for fear to examine danger, nor scope for any event or sudden change to dampen the spirits, he commanded as many of his people as possible to prepare for the conflict, keeping dead silence as they did so.

At a big conference held by the Senate it was decided to assault the fort from the side of Ongolmo's post. A spy advised them that those manning the defences were complacent and slack, few in number, inexperienced and unarmed – that their absent captain had made a speech about the war, deciding he would not return until he had subdued the country, and consolidated the recent conquests. So with the fort being very poorly stocked it would be easy to force entry and massacre the garrison. He was so persuasive in presenting his case that all the opinions and votes were in his favour; there was no dissension. Spiritedly, with firm intent, they swore anew their allegiance to him, promising to follow him to the death, carrying the flag where Fortune led.

Then Caupolicán, firmly resolved, spoke with Pran – a skilful soldier, simple in his face and brutal in his demeanour, but acute, subtle, cautious, resourceful, wise, cunning, dissimulating, malicious, garrulous, practical, discreet, quick to react, solicitous and attentive, secretive. He was well schooled in the ways of austerity which arduous tasks required. Dressed in poor clothing, he went into the Spanish precinct; pretending to be a renegade Indian, he joined the Indian servants in the Christian ranch, giving every impression of simplicity. But beneath his bland exterior he kept a keen watch on everything around him. Never revealing his attentiveness, and with well-simulated ignorance, he penetrated the secret plans – each time, entering the guarded area, looking like a rustic figure, he noted the men, arms, disposition, location and what seemed to be the strongest and weakest points in the fort.

On the other hand, listening and asking questions to the less cautious ones, he secretly probed confidential matters; here and there, touching their hearts, he searched with disguised reasons for a suitable vessel into which he could empty his overloaded breast. Then, trying the fords and the most overgrown paths, he came, little by little, to a dangerous doorway, where he met a cunning barbarian called Andresillo. They went in search of food – approved rations for Indian tenants.

Through the devious and misleading reasoning which Pran presented, the other one came to describe the humiliation which the Araucanian state was suffering – the insults, offences,

deaths and degradations, force and tyranny – bearing the painful memory of lost happiness and vanished liberty. Credulous Pran found the false friend so forthcoming when he found a willing and grateful ear. At a suitable time and place, swayed by this cunning pose, he dropped his disguise, opened up his secret heart and presented his covert plan:

“Oh soldier! If you feel for the lamentable loss of Arauco, and the wretched plight of our miserable country – today Fortune and powerful Fate, showing us a favourable face, put freely, into your hands, the life and salvation of the state. The great Caupolicán, who has never faced a rival on equal terms, who always holds the top position and commands obedience – in tranquil peace and bloody war, seeing your courage, diligence and resourcefulness, wants to give you a chance to reverse the nation’s fortunes. The beginning and end of this greater enterprise will be ascribed to you; all the honour, the glory, the authority, the profit, will be yours. It only needs one thing to clinch the deal: you must be elected to take on such an important task. When this has been committed to you by the will of the people, there is hope for success. Having taken on your happy destiny, you will have the courage to face its dangers. And so, in humble attire (because you cannot deceive me) I come – because in this way I can give you profit in part and in totality.

“I am relaying the order (unless there are any hidden drawbacks) to attack at midday with great fury and a large force, because a certain spy has advised that then the soldiers will be in bed, exhausted from their night’s vigil. Neglected by the sleeping people, the iron gate will be unguarded. In this way the garrison can easily be dispatched and the fort demolished. Then nobody will remain in the whole southern region to resist our power.

“All that helpful information you have provided has made everything plain sailing. About three leagues from here there has arrived, shrouded in the night and dark shadows, far from his army, secure in word and faith, someone who wants to discuss with you alone that which I have outlined to you. Expand your chest if you wish to enjoy this promised happiness, as well as the great honour that you are to attain – as the country will be redeemed by you; all will owe you their lives for your having taken on the task; we will always recognise that we have gained salvation at your hands. Look, then, at what appears before you – relish this happy occasion; do not be ungrateful to Heaven for having offered you such a great destiny – which you alone could accept – for your country, which is languishing in painful, bitter servitude, and begs you to answer its plea.”

He ended his speech there, aware of the countenance of the quiet Indian who remained deadpan and impassive throughout his oration. Then, with a happy face and demeanour, with heart and soul doubled in strength, without further ado, he replied to the proposal.

“Who could hope to put into words my happiness and seeing that the future of my dear, beloved country is in my hands? Neither riches, honour, duty or office, ruling the world nor kingship could do as much for me as could the common good of the nation. The arrogance of these wanton marauders, the brutal regime which robbed us of our liberty, will not be

tolerated. Divine Providence has already passed sentence on these tyrants, and has called the arms of Araucana to wreak vengeance.

“Turn to Caupolicán and I, for my part, will offer my services. For as long as you want to stretch it out, I will take your offer. Beyond any doubt I will be with him tomorrow, in the most deserted part of the wild coastline, to discuss in depth the task in hand. So now it would be good for us to part company for a day; people may be watching and listening; they may get suspicious. Tomorrow, out in the open, we can speak more freely, and you will leave me better satisfied. Goodbye, for it is late, and there is far to go!”

And so they went their separate ways – one to the Araucanian camp, the other to the Spanish – one happily confiding in the Captain, telling him – point by point, *all that you will hear in the next Canto*.

Canto XXXI

(Andresillo tells Reinoso what was discussed with Pran. He talks cautiously with Caupolicán who cunningly approaches the fort, thinking he will find the Spaniards asleep.)

The ugliest evil, most condemned and totally offensive to divine goodness, is betrayal of bonds of friendship; this reverberates on earth, in heaven and in hell. Though the Lord may approve of the treason, he wishes harm on the traitor and finds him an abomination. Ill-fated is that malice which infuriates its beneficiary!

On rare occasions you will see that the treacherous remain secure – hated by the world which is governed by the same self-interest, always suspect as friends, never credible – even when they speak the truth. Finally, nobody escapes the punishment borne by his own malice. If in the laws of warfare he who defects to the enemy is perfidious, what is he who sells his friend's freedom and blood to the foe – the one who, with a front of loyalty wishes to turn traitor to his own country – putting his sharp knife to its throat, with so much rage and odium?

A wise and cautious person can protect himself against a known public enemy – the perverse, the insolent, the malicious – but not against the under-cover traitor, the one who has never overtly offended, who keeps his naked dagger hidden in the disguise of a friend. No door is secure against the disloyal, nor is there a greater enemy than the hidden one. The proof of this is Andresillo, who successfully deceived his friends – he who, with the great prize he was carrying, covered a great distance in a short time, and put before Reinoso, who was secure, and oblivious of his deed, praising the traitor for his malice, acknowledging his treason, saying:

“You see that fate is compassionate to you today; it has ordered things so that I can be a valuable friend to you – having left to my free will the death or salvation of your enemy – putting into Andresillo's hands the arbitrary sentence and the knife. But by purportedly denying my debt and loyalty to my land and nation, I wish to sacrifice my life to get you out of this jam. Abhorred by my own countrymen, I will attract the bitter decree and the weapons, deflecting a mass of swords which would have been aimed at your side.”

After this there was a long dialogue with Pran, which (if you're happy about it) I will discuss at length in the last canto. He left Reinoso terrified. With an effusive show of gratitude he threw his arms around Pran's neck. Extending the cunning and artifice with which he played his double-agent role, he exaggerated his distinguished service for the Kingdom and for Christianity, saying that such great benefit would always remain in our memory, and be generously rewarded with an honourable prize.

They then agreed that on another day at the same time and place, they would secretly meet the nearby captain. They would understand from what they saw and heard, the most suitable

issues to negotiate, reaching the desired goal by guile and deviousness. With that understanding the two men parted company.

But before this happened, whilst going through a thickly wooded valley, Andresillo found a friend who had been posted as a sentry. Hoping this man would be a guide to meet Caupolicán face to face, he took a few steps towards him, as he had walked some distance ahead of his people. The sentry received him cordially:

“Oh Captain appointed by Heaven to this noble task! You to whom the redemption of the country has justly and rightly been committed. I well know your zeal – motivated by pure virtue and courage; you aspire to heights unscaled by anyone before you! Having understood the intrepid intention and plan in your heart guided by a prosperous Fortune which promises success – I am convinced that with you as our guide, a large force of us will strike a blow against the Spanish fort at noon. To that end you have quietly and secretly come here where, your mouth being the measure. I want to assure you of your just reward, and to see that, since the command of this enterprise has been awarded to you, you will want us to be the agents of its execution – you as head and leader, giving us the orders, instructions, ways and lines to follow.

“On behalf of the Senate, I promise you, apart from the Honours, an estate. And by the mighty Eponamon I swear that this will be anywhere you desire. I put myself in your hands; I take the risks and devote myself to your cause, so that according to the order agreed, the hoped-for benefit is not delayed. Then, with your help and my confidence – which promises a successful day. I have a cache of arms in some undergrowth near here. It is time to press home the attack – before anyone discovers it is imminent and the enemy fort is prepared.

“Be resolved and determined; it is as you desire – briefly: behind this mountain is a huge, well-disciplined army, and because you know it is in good order, its morale, its weapons, you will reach it. I will wait for you with high hopes and spirits.”

The stubborn traitor was attentive to the General’s promised; neither the offer nor the reward deterred him from the ugly evil he was committing. Although someone so timid had doubts – seeing that man’s gigantic stature, his gallant, ferocious demeanour and his courage. In build and posture he represented the form of furious Mars. His great, robust body was armoured – he wore a strong, barred cuirass, with a scaly dragon in relief on the high crest of the shield; on the right, his stick – ribbed with iron; a sharp sword hugging his side.

Seen by Andresillo, when he could do his evil deed, keeping hold of his treason and his double tongue, going so far in a short time with a happy air and a pleasant face hiding his treacherous heart. Kneeling on the ground, he turned to Caupolicán with this reply: “Oh great Apo! Do not think it is because of honour, wealth or land that I am come to your feet to obey you, determined to live and die in your service; neither that you have offered me nor anything beyond that to be desired, arouse me as much as the main bond between us. I thank heaven that my hopes are rooted in your prudence and great courage; I feel that with you I am

heading in the right directions. Because delay could be harmful, it will be good if you bring the day forward – following Fortune, who has shown herself to be on our side.

“As for our unsuspecting enemies – accustomed as they are to night watches – when the sun is in the sky, they will be relaxing, unarmed, in their tents, lying naked on the ground, buried in wine and sweet dreams through the heat of the day, until the sun goes down. And if, as you say, you are prepared and the nearby people are in order, you should not miss this killing; if we hold back, the opportunity will be lost. So since there are no obstacles, do not defer your destiny and fortune! I pledge myself to give you victory; not for any prize – for virtue carries its own reward – that is the primary truth. It is enough that I serve you, that I graciously put myself forward, without more ado, to cut the bare throat of the tyrant.

“Tomorrow, in disguise, when the sun is half way through its circuit, Pran will come to my estate where we will await his desired arrival. Going into the enclosure he will then see the men given up to careless sleep, without precautions and apparently without leaders. Tonight, having silently re-routed to the right of the road, a thousand-strong squadron will be at the ready. When the sun goes to the East, you will see my men – like a concentrated whirlpool, lying under their arms by the light of day. Since you will be served by this move, I want to see – for my happiness and satisfaction, your ebullient squadron – fully prepared for such a signal, noble deed, by which Arauco will restore its primary strength and right; with Spanish tyranny struck down, it will extend its name and its own monarchy.”

Caupolicán remained consistent – as if he took the mission’s success to be secure – giving reasons which would move – not a mobile heart but a wall. As a token of solidarity he gave Pran a clear flute of pure gold, and a huge mace of pure glass – things held in great esteem amongst the Araucanians. Accompanied by happy Pran he went to the foot of a high mountain, where he saw the large Araucanian army lying in ambush. The traitor would have preferred to see them restless, with some feelings of doubt about their false and fickle fate. When hearts are unsteady, fear can do what virtue cannot achieve. But evil was already empowered, animating, spurring on, outrageously nurturing doubts, advancing the vicious scheme. So covering up the evil intent with mendacious appearances, the traitor methodically spied out the site, the order, the weapons and the men. At the end of the day, after having enquired about, and noted everything useful, having seen the set-up and made an estimate of the number of armed men – informed of all the essentials, he reached the enclosed; there Reinoso was already waiting for him, suspicious of his long delay.

He gave an exceptionally thorough account of his day, describing very animatedly our arrival at such an auspicious time. *If you had paid attention to my canto, you would remember that help arrived in the morning from the mountainous coast – on the same day as did those thirty men I mentioned.*

The night was spent preparing weapons and equipment, working on the ditch, the wall and the square, showing the dispositions to the people, until dawn revealed the deep defences in a sad light, heralding that day – to be distinguished by so much blood and death. Never in the

Southern Hemisphere was the sun seen rising so late in the day, refusing to give mortals their accustomed clarity and light. Finally it appeared, surrounded by signals, with the moon waxing before it, turning a fickle white face to the sky, so as not to look down on the Araucanian ground.

Secret preparations were made on both sides, equal in intent and aspiration, although differing in outcome. Now see Pran who, alone, and – according to the custom of the diligent Indians, loaded with a sheaf of wheat, came to look for the treacherous friend. He was at the exit to his ranch, busy watching the roads; when the arranged time came round, it seemed as if no-one had arrived. Malicel, goaded by indignant fury, pushed him on. But as is always the case with what one wants, there is no brevity which rules out delay. Then Pran, having arrived, assured him that the force was divided into three detachments, that they had discovered the walled site without having been seen, or having left any hint of their presence. With soft steps and in good order, carrying their hearts and weapons along, they headed straight for the fort.

With this sign of a different plan, Andresillo showed his pleasure, saying that doubtless our men, according to custom, would be asleep: then, stealthily, without more ado, the deceiver and the deceived would enter the fort together. In its precincts they saw all the officials and soldiers on their beds – sleepy without being asleep, neglectful, the harnesses and saddles removed from the horses – everything in a mess, wrapped up in dead silence and dreams.

Pran, seeing the calm and lack of vigilance in the fort, happy that they seemed blind to his suspect presence, without waiting a moment, then – by a short cut he knew, exercising his feet and his breath, he bore the desired news to the camp. Scarcely had the barbarian crossed over when Andresillo, in elevated tones, said: “Oh sturdy soldiers, to whom is entrusted the end desired from the war – take up arms quickly and break the silence. Press on at full speed, for I say you will reach the enemy’s gates.”

No sailor, hearing the cries of the pilot, and having a storm break as he is navigating between the rocks, was ever so diligent as were our men hearing the high voice of Andresillo, rushing out of the tents and reaching for arms. Some put on their well-worn breastplates; some fitted on their other armour and shields; some rushed out with arquebuses, lances or swords. The heavy artillery was set up at one of the open doors, full of a thousand shots, whilst other guns were mounted at the crosspieces, screens and loopholes.

Once the square in order and tasks delegated to the men, a rule of silence halted the tongues and calmed down the belligerence, leaving that area so quiet that any outside observer would conclude that everyone was asleep. Pran was no slouch in this situation, since we were scarcely at arms when the enemy suddenly appeared, surrounding us from both sides. They came so well hidden and silently, crouching under their arms; they came in – seeming lighter and faster than the speed of sound. *As the coursing hunter who has seen the prey and the place and who inches along, crouching, well-hidden amidst the grass and bushes – sometimes speeding up, sometimes holding back, treading noiselessly until he places himself,*

well-concealed at a point where he can make a certain shot – Just as silently, making just as valiant an attempt, the assailants appeared less than 30 paces from the fort, which they attacked silently, without a trumpet signal – over 2,000 men – at a gate left open more by design than through negligence.

I have no words to describe this crude and bloody assault, the tragedy and the anger at two things justly concurring. My soul, now human, now brutish, holds me back and considers me differently; even if I satisfied pious zeal, I condemn what I did as evil. I was right in the middle of the action. If I pause at this point to distance myself from it, I must say that I implemented very badly what had been promised. *And so, with my heart confused and perplexed about the rights and wrongs of the contest, I will leave my considered opinion of it for the next canto.*

Canto XXXII

(The Araucancians attack the fort and are repulsed with heavy casualties. Caupolicán decamps and retires to the mountains. At the request of some of his soldiers Don Alonso de Ercilla tells the true life story of Dido.)

Clemency is an illustrious virtue – never nurtured in a base heart. Through it Rome became a World Power – conquering more peoples that way than by the sword, taming indomitable kings and subjecting their states to Rome’s laws.

Glory does not lie in victory alone. A conquest has no true grandeur and excellence if the winner cannot follow up his success and implement its consequences with clemency. The conqueror is always remembered; if he acts purely from anger he will generate resistance. The victory of the clement winner is far greater, for he will win the hearts of the conquered. The cruel, inexorable captain is not so glorious after all; he who is less sanguinary is the greater and more praiseworthy. The ruthless sweep of the sword is excusable in the heat of fury. But when that rage has passed and the slaughter goes on in cold blood, it becomes pure spite, cruelty and tyranny.

Unless my observations and assessment deceive me, this massive bloodshed has destroyed the future of the land. *It has overstepped the laws and rules of war, perpetrating enormous cruelties unprecedented in the history of invasions and conquests.* But my opinion is only that of an individual. The common voice against me claims that according to the laws of the world and of Fortune, all is just and permissible for the victor. But leaving all this empty talk aside – now is the time when the brutal devastation started – with some justice in its cause, but pitiful in its totality.

I left you with the barbarian camp above the fort, in the middle of the furious attack when 1,000 weapons had been silently prepared to deal sudden death. Borne on by a ruthless destiny a great mass of men made their fatal dash, piling up at the doorway and the false entrance. Eternal God! What an extraordinary fracas! What a battering, what destruction came to those hapless people – blinded by the deception, thinking they were the deceivers! Who could describe the carnage, the frightful barrage of blows that the artillery could discharge in a moment? Some were run through, skewered; some lost heads and arms, others were crushed to pulp or perforated. There were bodiless limbs, dismembered bodies, chunks of flesh raining far and wide, livers, living entrails, red bones, dollops of brain . . . Just like a well-prepared mine, when it explodes with a terrible row, its sudden fury blasting walls and fortifications, wreaking massive havoc – the violent force of the gunpowder massacred that marauding squadron. Fickle, lawless Fortune tore the Araucanian army to pieces; they had no weapons to reply to the barrage, no adequate cover, nor any means to dodge the shots: every ball and bullet found a target. I had never seen so many die at once . . . although I try to force myself, I cannot continue . . . so many blows and wounds, so much death, drive me to distraction . . .

Although the shots were not well-aimed, when there was a clear stretch of plain before them, the horses, once spurred on, broke through the entrance and the occupied path. They wrought more carnage on the second wave of Indians – crowded together, taken by surprise – than the artillery had been able to do. I could gradually identify the forms of the dead – some trampled on by horses, others with their heads and chests gashed open – others again, pitiful to see, their brains and entrails spilled out, others hacked to pieces, others again – headless bodies.

The cries, laments, groans, tragic and pitiful cries, yells and clashing of weapons – inflated the air and bent the heavens! The wounded, struggling with death, twisted and writhed on the ground – so many lives departing through so many wounds. The duped Pran left the scene of terror – having seen the certainty of destruction, and recognised the falsehood of what Andresillo had told him. This realisation imposed such a penalty on him that although he could escape from the misery, unarmed in the midst of the weapons, he threw himself, desperate, to his death.

But the last Indians, the ‘lucky’ ones left to carry on the fight, took to their heels, swinging their swords. Eager to catch up with them our men went in pursuit, wounding and cutting down the stragglers, the less tenacious and nimble. But some brave foes who valued esteem more than life, slowed down the advance. Although there was a bitter struggle, the battle was quickly resolved, so that furious death sharpened its sword on both sides – *as in a stormy sky, when the clouds form in a thousand parts, some growing, some shrinking, others rising again – and the North West wind drives them on and piles them up, until it has made it shelter, leaving the sky cloudless and the air clear.* And so the army, astonished and disturbed, scattered itself, and sometimes tried to engage, turning bodies about-face. But under the violent pressure of the attack, they abandoned camp and banners that day, leaving behind their broken squadrons many dead and taken prisoner.

At the end of the attack they were undone and destroyed. Having divided the prisoners off from the rest we turned to an abandoned lodge; there thirteen selected chieftains were executed by a firing squad to set a punitive example. It is interesting to speculate about which of the brave leaders perished in the melee: in all the dangerous actions, Rengo, Orompello and Tucapel were always in the front line, opening up the way. My answer to that, sir, is that no captain or chief really distinguished himself in this action, seeing that there were fraudulent dealings on both sides. It is vileness and cowardice to attack an enemy off-guard. A victory coming from that has no glory; it can only be described in the basest terms. Also, remember that supreme courage saved them at the critical moment, as nobody, by request or for any other reason, wanted to come to their assistance, thinking it despicable to massacre unarmed people.

For honour in warfare lies in danger; he who conquers without danger wins without honour. At the end of the day Caupolicán was worn out and enfeebled; he had lost a lot of blood but wrought little vengeance for his side. Seeing his people terrified and exhausted, their hope and ardour frozen, he struck camp to give them some respite. He wanted to be diverted while

the course of contrary fate was passing – know well his struggle, worn out and aged by weary Fortune. And so he dispersed his people – but into well-organised units, ready instantly to reassemble. And having retired with only ten men – ones of confidence and courage, now in the wild mountains, now in the populous valleys, he covered up his tracks and lodged in hidden places – never staying anywhere for very long, using his barbaric nerve to keep his men fearful and obedient.

Day after day we went on his uncertain trail, leaving no place untested, wearing ourselves out in the process. In the most distant zones we found houses occupied by the most desperate people in the land – refugees from the war. They said they would gradually return to their deserted estates, but that the General was coercing them with inhuman measures. If he persisted in that, the soldiers, broken down by the protracted war, would be willing to lay down their arms.

Although those words were false, great care was taken to spy out all the land, there being nowhere – mountain, valley, river bank or plain where they did not seek out the barbarians. But for good or evil, peace or war, we got no sign of him though we searched everywhere. No threat, punishment or torture could elicit any trace of him nor any sweet talk or bribes winkle out any lead on him. We went on, cautiously, according to each one's inclination, day and night, afflicted by sleep and by our weapons. One day when spying out the land, following disused paths, escorted by a chatty company of soldiers, we found a hidden ranch, deserted by its Indian inhabitants. This we considered secure because of its remoteness, and the cover of the surrounding woodlands.

Under a bundle of uprooted grass we found a girl, wounded in the head. She could not have been over fifteen, and was noble in appearance. Her uneven colour showed her loss of blood – which had soaked through her thin white robe, enhancing her pitiful beauty. I asked what had brought her to such a strange, remote place, how and why she had been wounded and treated with such inhuman cruelty. She, with a fallen face and soul, in a debilitated voice:

“Sad death is a certainty after a happy life. Because you understand the madness that human beings carry inside them, know that less than a month from now my father, having private love for me, married me with my free consent – in such a way that I believed that all my desires would be fulfilled in him. But his rare perseverance and courage which equipped him well for extremities led him to an early death. Our squadron was torn to pieces. When I was near him, a bullet pierced his side – went right through him, and opened the way to my breast.

“He fell dead, leaving me alive – a life far more distressing than death. But a soldier, seeing me so afflicted, partly feeling pity for my state, wanting to put me out of my misery, dealt me this wound to finish me off – with an arm that, although compassionate, was not strong enough to despatch my soul, and good came to me after so much harm.

“He easily lay me on the ground, although he did not knock me out; the force and seething

fury of the mob went past with a deafening din. But then a chief, a relation of mine, who had remained hidden in a pit as they passed, took me in his arms and bore me away from that tumult – to this hidden thicket – where each moment I hope to die. But what I hope for takes its time; it is the essence of contentment not to come to those who expect it. And although I feel I am at the end of my life, heaven does not decree its termination. Nor has my time come, for my desire holds it back. I am sick and tired of life, having seen my husband and dear friend die; each hour I live it seems that I am perpetuating evil, as I do not follow him. And since there is now the opportunity, take pity on me, finishing here and now where the soldier left off, starting with a loose arm.”

And so the poor girl begged for death in such a way that anyone might have granted her request – perpetrated barbarous cruelty out of compassion. But with that rabid fire eating away at my coarse heart, I saw that cruel love inflicted more pain than did the wound, and quickly resorted to the remedy of life. Having consoled her I acted on what I clearly saw: that death was a remedy to be condemned as well as being an insult to the memory of her husband. I rubbed a herbal remedy (ordinary medicine for these people) into that pitiful wound – not so great but very dangerous. I applied this with skill, so that little by little she revived and could feel confident about weathering the danger. We agreed that she could go on alone, but before she left me, she said her name was Lauca, daughter and heiress of Millalauco.

Wandering around the prison, without finding anything of importance, I talked to the soldiers about the steadfast constancy of the Indians, praising their firm love and great tenacity – the chaste Elisa Dido did not sustain such rigorous fidelity to her husband. But a young soldier, overhearing the animated conversation, challenged me, saying that he did not think Dido was really so pure and chaste, for he had read in Maron’s *Aeneid* that, inflamed by lust and following the disgraceful object of her desire, she broke her faith and pledges to Sicheo. Having heard such an insult, and the soldier’s sinister objection, raised against that pure lady, without proper evidence, it seemed right for me to show him the error of his view, and all those who had heard me shared my opinion.

I told him that the Mantuan wanted to glorify his flourishing Aeneas because Caesar Augustus Octavius boasted of being his descendant, and used Dido inhumanly, falsely defaming her character, since it could be seen on close scrutiny that Aeneas lived 100 year before Dido.

On hearing my account, they were surprised that Virgil had denigrated Dido, as they had asked me to tell them the whole story. I, also thinking of amusing myself, and that a good yarn would ease the strain of the bonds of toil, wanted to please them. And so I gave them the reasons: I described a chaste life, pure in faith, defamed in repute and in the public eye, at this unpremeditated juncture betrayed by a rare example and occasion, and a spurious opinion which lasted so long that it could neither change its course, nor eradicate a deeply rooted error based on false information. And since in the camp there was nothing nice to do –

without wanting to spur my horse on, nor being able to kill time in any other way, I wanted to tell a story (if it caused no offence), to fill in this empty time.

As that bitter theme was so hard, sterile and unpleasant, and the narrow path we trod was so hard to follow, I was finally reduced to looking for an open space where we could easily amuse each other without getting exhausted. Seeing that the clash of arms was so deafening, so monotonous, we needed to ginger up our tired souls and pass the weary hours more comfortably, I made this digression, which shortened the central part of our path. Then an impertinent fiction which destroyed someone's honour gained sympathetic ears, and the Queen of Tyre, besmirched with shame. Her honour shall be restored by the truth, which is a fundamental law of mankind. Once it is proclaimed, full heed should be paid to it at all times.

The greatest cause that has moved me (apart from the one I have seen importuned), is the honour of faithful Dido, wrongly condemned: let whoever is inclined to hear the truth pay careful attention – evil words offend even when uttered in jest, and now is a good time to say good things. Carthage was founded 70 years before Rome by Dido, illustrious queen, once venerated as a goddess by the people of Tyre. Her Father was King Belo, and she was married to the Supreme Pontiff of the Great Temple of Alcides – the foremost dignitary of the State after the king himself. He was called Siqueo, and Dido had an unshakeable faith in him. He was a wise man, well-versed in his ceremonies, and had inestimable riches. But the one closest to him was the cause of his miserable death. And because of the greed of many people, he would never be secure. Belo left two heirs, Pygmalion and Dido whom, in his will, he charged with inviolable kindred love and sibling loyalty which, although it lasted through the first days, but was then corrupted by greed for the treasures – was poisoned.

Dido felt so deeply for his death. Unable to resist the pain, with a flood of tears, she cut a vein. Her beautiful limbs and serene face were shrouded in a black cloak; with great funereal pomp she was laid in a sumptuous tomb. Although the imposing tomb and monument proclaimed her pure love, the grandeur of those structures did not match the grief and deep feelings of the Queen who, ever with devotion and continuous tears and laments, called to the deaf spirit, in the company of the cold ashes, saying:

“It is right that for you to consign me to this solitary apartment; evil which can be suffered is trivial and brief in comparison with the insufferable. But I want heaven to prolong my dying; because if grief lasts, it is stronger than death.” She proclaimed hatred and rancour against her perfidious, powerful brother, crying out ceaselessly to heaven for revenge, with mute anger and rabid groans, giving vent to that sickening assault, she released her repressed anger with a thunderous cry, saying: “Tell me, traitor, what depraved motive, beneath all sibling bonds and law, moved you to such detestable malice against your own flesh and blood? If it had just been insatiable greed for riches, you would have left the treasure and not life – tempering your impiety and insane fury with love and respect for your sister. If you ungratefully ignore the benefits you received as a brother-in-law, then look at the nefarious sacrifice of your uncle and the horrendous malice nurtured in your breast; you cannot say this

was an accident which eliminates all possible guilt. If you had given me some inkling of your evil intent, you would not have pretended you were taking such a desperate step to enrich your coffers. But when the evil became destiny, it could not be prevented in time. Ay! What is the use of lamenting now – it is always too late when the tears start flowing.

“Why, proud enemy, do you hold back from fulfilling all your desires; why so blind with greed that you did not kill Dido as well as Sicheo – you made your mark on the world with an atrocity so vile that the abominable history of your betrayal will echo through the centuries. In all reason, should you – traitor, tyrant, perverse, atrocious, sacrilegious, murderous, be allowed to keep the name of brother? In view of my association with you, my reputation will go hand in hand with yours; my honour will suffer grave injustice because fame does not celebrate the just.

“If you hear me, great foe, you will be irritated by what I say; so let it be. If I follow my husband in my fortune, all that you are after will be yours. If you lost your life alongside mine, it would stain your reputation and destroy mine. It partly seems as if someone who forgives easily is giving his consent. What malice is so powerful that it does not exist on heaven or earth? What mighty, ultimate power defers my fate? Why should I suffer more? Ay! If it is bad to desire death, it is worse to fear it, when death is appropriate, Death holds no pain for the departed; it is the end of pain and worry. But the fact that you are protected, as a king, prevents me from taking my legitimate vengeance. I will try to prevent your bad end with a two-faced front and feigned sibling loyalty. And when you think you are empowered, you will go – at the same time as I will – without sister, wealth or rights, and with the infamy of a hideous crime hanging over you.”

So the sad queen lamented above the rich sepulchre, wretched and solitary, eager for vengeance but reluctant to use force. Using her prudence and discretion, homely and affectionate, she wrote tenderly to her absent brother, letting him know that she was tired of mourning and of the isolation she was suffering in those palaces. Hurt as she was by the sad memory, she wanted some happy company to afford some relief from her sorrow, longed to go with him, putting an end to all her tears, with all her riches and treasure. To this end she assembled a well-equipped fleet into which, when it was in port, she loaded all the treasure and entourage it could carry. She simply had to cross the sea – the only awesome impediment to her final desired contentment.

Then the ambitious king, having got what he desired so much – seeing that in the happy harbour, Fortune was finally smiling on him, more exuberant and greedier than ever, despatched a big convoy of ships and galleys, well equipped with personnel, provisions and presents. This splendid fleet rapidly reached harbour, unthinkingly. The King’s men disembarked from it, then swore allegiance to Dido who, showing pleasure at their arrival, with laudable care and providence, put up all the people splendidly and generously.

In due course, solicitous Dido ordered her people to get ready. With much pomp and circumstance, the furniture was packed – while at night, under cover, the treasure was loaded

into the ship, in such secrecy that nobody noticed any sign of it. 60 boxes were prepared, filled with sand, weighed down, fitted with strong, garnished locks, reinforced with double metal plates – these were carried in full view of the public, giving the impression of containing the gold and jewels, the riches and treasure. Then Elisa embarked, with the tender sentiments of the grieving people. A gentle wind, blowing into the stern, filled the sail. With a serene movement the ship sliced through the calm, level sea, all the fleet beginning to follow the defeat of the high captain.

That night and the following day the fleet sailed with a favourable wind. But when the coast was out of sight, and Dido found herself out at sea, with her noble and obedient company gathered on board her ship, she gathered all the other people in sight – telling them, with a valiant heart, that her plan was not to go to her unjust, cautious brother: he really was her enemy because he, treacherously, under the cloak of brotherhood and sincere faith, moved by sacrilegious desire, had done her Sicheo to death. So she too, unprotected from his secret frauds and betrayals, had to leave her beloved country, her kingdom, her dwelling and possessions, and hand over her destiny to the capricious wind and waves, seek new provinces and regions where she could live secure, free from the tyranny of his dominion.

She added that, since her riches had been the cause of his loss, the husband killing him for them, he would perhaps come in pursuit. She had taken all her treasures with her with the avowed intent of throwing them into the sea; there they could be buried so as never to come into his hands again. And so she had assembled the barred coffers full of sand. With a great proclamation they were thrown into the sea. The Royal Ministers, with sad expressions – astonished, confused and disturbed, looked at each other, thinking that the action of the happy queen was very strange.

Thinking about this grave occurrence held them mute and terrified: they knew that the king's fury would be detonated by the loss of the treasure, and that there was no reason or excuse sufficient to deter the king from incriminating them all and executing them in his fury. Then, as the shrewd queen saw that the right moment had come for her to convert her brother's frightened men to her cause – before time and waiting could give any leeway for second thoughts – having calmed the people down, she spoke to them thus:

“Friends: you have seen with your own eyes the evidence of my firm intent, and as fortune, according to her will, set me adrift on the broad sea, you can turn – if you do not think it is mad – to tell the king the sad news of the jettisoned treasure, and that I have gone to a new land and region. But you know how his boundless fury is unleashed. When you face him without the desired treasure he will show no patience. He will unleash his barbarous hand on your necks without listening to any excuse – adding evil and guilt to the mass of it already there. And since it is through fear of tyranny and reprisals from a furious old king that you have taken me away from my dear country to seek new lands – whoever wants to stay with me will be protected, and have a share in all my expected profits. The time and place is opportune; in order to take counsel, I will remove myself so that (as you are wise) each one of you can opt for the lesser evil. If you return to the king, you will have no escape. That

grieves me, so I ask you to join me; then you will not be targets for punishment. I imagine the deaths and cruelties which they have at the ready to inflict on you. Forget about your houses and estates; you had better them for the sake of your lives. In times of real turmoil one only thinks of escaping alive, knowing that all wealth and property is subject to danger and vacillation.”

As they listened to the queen’s arguments the ministers were disturbed; a thousand points circulated in their perplexed minds. But finally (though their intentions were diverse) they all appeared united in their resolve to follow Dido to the end of her voyage, giving her unconditional obedience. When their faith was confirmed by oath, with none of them refusing, the fleet set sail. Dido ordered that they head for Cyprus, where they were graciously received by the Cypriot people, who made a gift of eighty virgins – to be married to the people who had declared their devotion, looking for some suitable land to found a village. Then, with the next favourable wind, they headed for North Africa. *But there is so much detail here that I will have to divide this canto into two parts.*

Canto XXXIII

(Don Alonso follows Dido's sea voyage until her arrival in Bizerta. He tells how she found Carthage, and the reason for her suicide. This canto also describes the capture of Caupolicán.)

Many impetuously take the path of virtue, only to blunder into that of vice, from which it is hard to extricate themselves. The path away from a well-regulated life is plain and easy; but the road from vice to virtue is far harder, far more bitter than its contrary. And so Pygmalion has signs of virtue, and with great principles promised just and liberal hopes – but, perverted by greed, he changed so much so rapidly – to become not only avaricious, but inhuman, perfidious and bloodthirsty.

We know of the treachery, the clandestine murder of the brother-in-law who had lived happy and contented, self-assured with his sibling bonds. The king gave every appearance of loving virtue; but there is no malice more insidious than that which bears virtue's mask. Things did not turn out as he had planned – in fact, the reverse. Not only did he not get what he wanted; he lost his ships and his people. The queen, as I said, sailed happily westwards, her fleet reaching distant shores. Her course was diverted to the right, near the treacherous Szirtes and, passing Licudia, skirted the sandy coast of Africa – and always sailing, passed between Ciervo and Lampadosa – arriving safely at Tunis, having been guided there by the fateful decree.

Seeing there the rich, fertile ground adorned with luxuriant plants, the temperate climate, the clear, peaceful sky, having forgotten her worries about her brother seeing far, far away as she was – she decided to found a city for her residence and as a seat of government. To this end, she made a deal with the people living in the site area. They sold her a piece of land that could be covered by an ox hide. Sensing that they could make a profit from the transaction, the inhabitants agreed with the queen on a price and ratified the agreement. Having made the payment, and fixed the location, Dido demanded that they carefully find a big ox which they should skin – the hide to be stretched in her presence, and then cut into thin strips – on which, under the queen's discretion, with expert advice, they were to put the names of traitors. When the excess was paid and the site marked off, rumours began to spread that the queen's expedition was bearing the hidden treasure. They cunningly threw the coffers full of sand into the sea, so that when the brother got wind of what had happened, if the loot was not there, he would not come in pursuit.

Having been re-educated and their harmful defects corrected, consuls, magistrates and other officials were appointed by the Queen. When the master architects were brought in and the necessary materials assembled, the fearless queen ordered work to start on the famous city. This was built in good order, showing the Fates most propitious; it was rapidly ennobled and

embellished with lofty, sumptuous buildings. The new republic was proclaimed, laws set up and officers appointed, with whom the people could negotiate to live in peace and stability.

Through the great decisiveness and intelligence with which the obedient people were governed, cooperation was growing and short-term measures were extended. The agreeable situation catalysed minds and spirits, there coming to settle in the new state many people from widely differing locations. And as at that time paper had not been invented, they wrote on animal skins; each skin was called a map, of the same kind as we use today – and so this city was built according to a plan drawn on a stretched-out hide: it was called the Carthage of Dido.

In a short time it became so famous, of such grandeur that it was marvellous to see the happiness of its people, showing that queen to have such fortitude and prudence in governing the people, that many other princes and kings based their legal systems on her city. Such was the force of her personality, so sound her judgement that she came to be taken as a goddess; in her time nobody could compare to her in beauty. So people went to see her as a miracle of nature, something never known hitherto – which is unknown amongst the idolaters of the earth, of whom the greater part turn to heaven. There are great women who give themselves to death for fame, others who liberate oppressed states by miraculous deeds, but none of those admirable qualities were ever combined in one person as they were in Dido – rich, beautiful, pure, wise, constant and supremely judicious.

Word spread about honest Yarbass: a Muslim monarch, a fearless, rigorous man feared all over North Africa. Moved by the juvenile fury of fresh, new love for a distant object, he sent envoys, the best in his kingdom, to the queen. He asked, as payment for the torment suffered each hour on her account, that with a happy marriage she would become the first lady of his person. If she refused, than in all justice to one who belittled so great a king, he would descend on her with a mighty army to destroy her people and city.

The meeting with the envoys took place in the Senate House, but the queen did not attend; both the request and the threat were intimated to the Senators; it caused them great consternation, considering that the vows of chastity and the pure life which the queen protested were repugnant to the intentions of Yarbass. They undertook the difficult negotiations then appeared before the queen with sad faces and a timid air, their eyes low, their faces flushed, showing displeasure with the outcome of the conference.

They said to her: “You will know that Yarbass, having heard of the reputation of your excellent government, and its laudable aims, begs you, without delay, to send 20 of your most learned councillors to reform his statutes. Suffering is a bitter thing, improper for our status and our profession. And as for going to uncivilised countries to pacify the restless multitudes, change their customs and traditions – all the Councillors refuse, on legitimate grounds. Seeing that we could lose our dear, ultimate peace, without hope of its restoration, and that by not acceding to that impious request, we would put the state in mortal danger – giving that unworthy young king a pretext to destroy your worthy people and your great renown, by fire

and the sword, with a mighty fleet and a huge army. That, in sum, is Yarbass's request, backed by threats. But our weariness prevents us from carrying it out: according to the letter of the law, we should be retired. In all reason, it is unfair to expect us to leave our homes, broken down by toil, in our twilight years. If in our youth we threw ourselves into danger, it is good that in our tired old age we can get a taste of the relaxation we have earned. Then when our time comes, we can close our eyes with gentleness, and commit our ashes to be buried. And since he makes his outrageous demand to be in your presence, it is essential that you, with your skill and artifice, prepare a response – your brains and judgement stemming the evil which the Mauretanian king proposes, in a way that will preserve peace and love, and keep us from further drudgery.”

Queen Elisa listened attentively to this carefully composed speech. With a happy face and a grave smile (although she felt different in her heart) she treated them all in an agreeable, gentle and affectionate manner which, if they accepted at its face value, would draw them out of their shelters, saying:

“Dear Friends, whom I have never once seen giving yourself up to the Fates, or throw up the sponge; who and in times of peril always face head on the vicissitudes of Fortune: how can you forget your past exploits on such a just occasion? Do you want to see your country ruined – just because of the discomfort of a journey? It is common knowledge that every citizen should put his country first – not just before his comfort but before his life. And in all reason, in the name of human rights, it is a just, natural duty – a binding obligation – for every man to put the public good before the private. I declare before great Jupiter that I will offer up my life: the judicious world will know that I have done so of my own free will. And since you have led such strict and diligent lives, it is not good, when finishing off such long careers, to wipe out and undo all you have achieved.”

The Senators, having seen how Dido, following the route of reason, had fallen into the armed trap, troubled by her own words, changing their miserable faces for happy ones, hands and voices raised, told her:

“Lady: you justly vindicate yourself, dispelling our doubts and getting us out of this impasse. There are no arguments so cogent that they can prevail against the authority of your decree – so as not to waste time, we should tell you the secret; then there will be no justification for going back on your judgment. You will notice, O Queen, that Yarbass sent you a bunch of doddering old men. In fact, his kingdom and his people are well governed. He only wants your grace and company; under useful and honourable conditions he offers you a huge dowry and a vast number of gifts. Take note that if you do not accept holy matrimony with him, and through bad policy belittle his magnanimous offer, his forces will raze Carthage to the ground. It is up to you whether war or peace will prevail. If a good citizen must cheerfully offer his life for his dear country then it is even more imperative that you, as head of state, should abide by its laws – and you do not have sufficient cause to curtail the redemption of our fatigue, and give us our just deserts in a time of prosperity.

“If you are determined to follow this course, opting for barren chastity – see the state prostrate at your feet, and the innocent neck put in the noose – will you renounce your beloved country? Won’t you heed the protest? Shouldn’t you put the welfare of the country before the peace and quiet you desire?”

The queen was surprised at the demands and conditions proposed; she longed to hide the grief which radiated from her face. Using to the full her discretion and perceptivity, she reserved her reply, then raised her gentle, serene voice, so that the crowd were spellbound:

“Friends: in order to avert disaster I want to reply before Yarbas forces any more on us. But the deal proposed is something that my estate and my dignity do not allow me to respond quickly; although you would find it honest to do so. It would be pettiness, a betrayal of my obligations to you if I let myself be persuaded by your decision on a course of action – erasing the indelible stamp of my first love with a so-called new one. When one is best by contrary pulls, time and deliberation are vital. Friends: I ask you for three months for me to come to a decision on what must be done, to give satisfaction to myself and the people by not forcing me to hasty action. Foul-mouthed rabbles want to slander what is honest, and as institutors of laws, monarchs have to keep them under control. Tarbas will not come out as an enemy within three months, but when this time has passed, I shall be obliged to reply gratefully to his request. To have less leeway than I demand, to rush things forward, is an affront to my honesty and reputation – and it is not right to make excuses, for that is a sign of error and proclaims guilt.”

So the Queen ended her speech. She was forced to make a new agreement with Yarbas’s emissaries, who kept to the designated time limit to cement the marriage. At the request of the Senate, the envoys remained in Carthage throughout those days – in splendid accommodation, well-treated and with great rejoicing: the Senate insisted on this, in response to public opinion. The Queen postponed her reply, lending a grateful ear to their request. Meanwhile, in the world of her private thoughts, it seemed, from that point on, that it would be better to end her miserable life rather than to deviate from her steadfast faith.

Then came the final, fateful day. The people were gathered in the broad square. Richly attired, the Queen climbed up a high platform at whose foot was a sacrificial funeral pyre. From the platform she spoke these words:

“Oh faithful companions who show yourself involved in all the toils, who left your homes and your countries to follow my path, my destiny. Now bitter fate, to crown its perversity, forces me to leave your dear company at my own cost. It gives me intense grief to leave such loyal companions, but the powers of Heaven will not allow any other course of action. And so, to avert the great evils which terrorise Carthage, the remedy has been put in my hands. I want to deliberate on my decision.

“Since the bitter decree of Heaven prevents me from making good, and seeing that my City,

my State, is in a tight spot, I am forced to break my faith. I have to curtail myself as the object of the feigned love which arouses Yarbás, by ending my life. Without the pretext of me, the threat to Carthage will cease. I will do this by giving myself to death; although this may seem a drastic measure to you, it is quicker, easier, less extreme, and will minimise the damage. Then without danger to yourselves, the deluded Yarbás will come to his senses, and I will preserve the purity of my chaste and widowed milk.

“For the price of one life, Carthage will be saved from its distress. My example will compel you to do my will, with my pure blood shed here, I will satisfy the demands of Earth and Heaven – then die for my people, and sustain intact my primal faith with inviolable love. Do not lament the prospect of my death, as heaven approves it: a brief trauma and an honourable death assures life and eternity. If the angry knife of La Parca frightens those who want to live, you must not grieve at Dido’s death, for she who takes her own life lives as much as she wishes. I bid you farewell my friends – so that I can see you free and my husband satisfied . . .”

Wanting to do the fatal deed, she said no more. And so, calling out the name of Sicheo, she slashed her chaste breast with a dagger – then, from the shock of the blow, she fell into the raging flames of the funeral pyre.

Her death was deeply felt; for a long time, Carthage was in mourning. In memory of her signal deed they built a sumptuous temple, where Dido was worshipped as the Goddess of her country, honoured with rites and sacrifices during good times. Her decease caused revulsion amongst the elders. From then on, the people were ruled by 100 wise senior Senators. Rivalries grew; Carthage became powerful and greatly feared, to the extent that, at the height of its power, it put Rome in desperate straits.

That is the true story of the famous Dido, so maligned. Virgil, completely lacking in respect, falsified her story and edited out her purity to embellish his narrative. We can see that this harassed queen, able to marry and not to burn, opted for the funeral pyre rather than succumb to a degrading marriage.

* * *

The men all listened attentively to this extraordinary tale until we reached the fort,. The story and our trek ended simultaneously. Having rested that night we agreed, when morning came, to gain intelligence about our elusive enemy. But an Indian who was fortuitously taken prisoner by our escort, a man of brave demeanour, fast-handed and fleet of foot, persuaded by promises and gifts, said: “I am resolved and offer myself to deliver the great General Caupolicán into your hands. In some thick scrubland, nine miles from Ongolmo, there is a natural fortress, surrounded by marshes and ditches, which I could keep secure with a company of just ten men – until your rising fortunes damped their ardour. By a narrow, disused path that I can track down, I’ll guide you through the dark night so that you can rescue your people. Before dawn I will lead you to the hideout, and fulfil my obligations to you. This I swear on my life.”

His arguments were carefully heeded as his promise seemed so solid. Then a squadron, equipped with experts and sufficient numbers for all emergencies, with the friendly Indian in front, set forth in secrecy at twilight, with big strides and quiet steps. By a narrow, intricate path ascending and descending big slopes, guided by the solicitous barbarian, they had an easy walk. But then the dark shadows were lightened by the approaching dawn. Making for a rocky stream, the Indian turned to our men and said:

“I am not going on: it is impossible to follow the route on which we have started. This is a terrifying prospect, and makes me hold back my steps in dread. I imagine seeing a horrible side of Caupolicán, furious with me when he comes to know that I, and I alone, was the one who betrayed him.

“Having reached this stream, although you are without a trace or path, you will quickly find the way to this site, in the midst of a spinney and some scrubland. And you will gain access because, in the dark, the sentry on the hill will not discover your arrival and my betrayal. Having guided you to this point, I will turn back, for I have led you, in safety, thus far while putting myself in great danger. And since you have come to the key position, now is the time for quick action: any lost time is irrecoverable – hazardous to the extreme. If they do get wind of your arrival, the rocky site is occupied, and it is easy to make an easy, safe retreat down a precipice. You must see that waiting will harm you. Get a grip on your venturesome fate: you have your enemy less than a mile ahead.”

The Indian would not take another step forward – not for any coaxing, offer or promise, nor was the threat of death or prison enough to move him from his stance. Thinking that time was of the essence and quick action essential, our men tied him to a pine tree and pushed ahead.

After marching for a mile, they came to a dark, shadowy grove. Having broken into this they found a big thatched cabin, its surrounding square fortified by a precipice leading down to a river. The surrounding area was covered in bulrushes, huts, squares, ranches and huts.

Noticing our men from the top of a hill, the sentry sounded the alarm to warn the unsuspecting General. But in a rush our men surrounded his lodge; the proud barbarian jumping out at the door, which at that time stood open. Seeing his path was blocked, sensing the immediate danger to his life, wielding a heavy hammer, he tried to open up his way. Jumping up very high to give greater force to his landing, he seized a beam, crossed at the top, the two pieces firmly locked together.

Yet a soldier, pushing ahead towards the door and stabbed him in the arm, penetrating his muscles and flesh. At this the Indian drew back, and seeing how precarious the defence was, told his men to give themselves up – in no way to resist.

They came out, unarmed, wanting to be taken to the estate under guard. They were poor

soldiers: fleeing from the war in terror and trepidation, afraid of being held up by the outlaws, they came out through the occupied door without their customary arms.

The Spanish entered as one body, to find nine high-ranking officers who having laid down their arms gave themselves up with a show of ignorance. Their hands were tied behind their backs, and the spoils shared out. The crafty captain was guarded with special care: he had assured us with a serene gesture that he was a common soldier, but his physique gave the impression of his being a great personage. Some time was spent trying to work this out; there was much dialogue with the others, who protested that he was a man of little account.

Our men got into their permitted yelling and looting; no ranch, house or hut was spared from plundering and sacking. Then from a tent nearby, at the top of a great ravine, rushed a woman through the roughest scrub. But a black man followed her at a distance as she went down the hillside by a narrow, intricate path, with which she was unfamiliar. She held to her breast a fifteen-month old child, poorly clad in a garment of his wretched father who had been taken prisoner – to the chagrin of all. He went after her, unaware that she was such an important woman, while our men went on, guided by the sound of the brook. Then they discovered the sad spectacle of her husband walking ahead, deprived of his arms and insignia, tied up with the rest of the crowd.

The great distress did not explode into a lament, nor did the woman show any sign of distress until with raging fury, her son in front of her, she sounded forth, saying: “The robust alien hand which tied up your effeminate right arm would have been kinder to you, more worthy of you, if it had pierced this cowardly breast. Are you that man who is a few days proclaimed the extent of your exploits, he whose voice alone could make the remotest nations tremble? Were you the captain who promised to conquer the Spaniards and put the Southern Hemisphere under the yoke of the Araucanian Empire?

“Woe is me! How I was deceived by my arrogance and erroneous thoughts, seeing that I was renowned, worldwide as Fresia, wife of the great Caupolicán! now, wretched and miserable, I recognise that it was all in vain – seeing you as a prisoner in a desert, when you could have died an honourable death. What are these dangerous endeavours, which cost so much blood and so many lives, these risky enterprises to which you devoted so much effort? What are the glorious victories of these arms now tied up? Has it all ended up with you just being a prisoner of these dreadful people?

“Tell me: did you lack the strength to triumph against the fickle Goddess? Don’t you know that a quick, honourable death makes a life glorious and immortal? Look at this pathetic garment – as I wanted nothing else from you. As soon as I got the news, I followed you, sad, wounded, in your death throes. Take your son, who was the knot with which legitimate love had bound me – me, whose fecund breasts have been dried up by pain and a heavy blow. Lament that your fine-limbed body has turned into that of a woman – for I do not want the title of mother, of the infamous son of this infamous father.”

Spitting this out in fury, she thrust the tender child forward; seething with rage she was gone in an instant. In short, nothing (no pleas, no threats) was enough to persuade that cruel mother to take back her son.

She was declared to be the new mother and they took their path again with great speed, releasing en route the faithful guide whom they had, in fear, left tied to a tree trunk. At the end of the day, in a large formation, they entered the square, to tumultuous applause. The Spaniards took great pains to sound out the Indians, in order to make sure that it really was Caupolicán, as there were clear signs of this in his appearance. But none of them said, either in his presence or in his absence, that he was anything more than a common soldier, of humble stock and moderate status. But when pressed more intensively, some gave the lie that he had died nearby. But then, when taken back in front of him, in fear, they took back their words, denying the truth, already ‘verified’, stated by them in his absence.

Sensing the danger and seeing they could not cover their tracks, they abandoned this futile expedient, and tried to play their last card: calling to Captain Rengo, who came to see what they wanted – *they told him, coolly and calmly, what I will tell you in my next verses.*

Canto XXXIV

(Caupolicán talks to Reynoso; knowing he is to die he converts to Christianity and bravely faces a miserable death. The Araucanians elect a new General. Meanwhile, King Philip raises a levy of men to enter Portugal.)

Oh wretched arduous life, subject to so many vicissitudes! How suspect is Fortune, for there is no one who does not fall from it. What delicious things do not finally go bitter and nasty? There is no pleasure without the downside of torment at the end of delight. Throughout history there have been famous men whom life has tarnished, on whom the world would have wished an early death. Hannibal is a good example, as was the Consul overthrown in Farsalia. By living too long he lost not the second but the first place in this world.

This point is reinforced by the case of Caupolicán, a famous captain and great warrior who took first place in arms among Native Americans. But Fortune cursed him by spinning out his last days; his miserable fall was much greater than his rise. Recognising that his people were vacillating, hesitant in their faith, sensing that after its spectacular ascent, his fortune was bound to decline, he wanted to speak clearly to Reynoso. Having learned what had happened, and with all the people gathered, the Barbarian spoke:

“It is my bitter destiny to fall from my status as captain and be reduced to such a shameful state. This enfeebled arm cannot wield my sword to open up the road to death for my breast, and put an end to this miserable day. But considering you as worthy people, by whom any life can be spared without shame, I grant what you ask. But then I would make a request to you: do not think I fear death, for death is feared by people who are doing well – while my experience has proved how bad it is to live in shame.

“My foundations have been demolished. I am Caupolicán who had absolute command over the Araucanian state. The Peace was in my hands, and the making of every decision according to my will. As my responsibility, I held all the land in my reins; all obeyed me. I am the man who killed Valdivia in Tucapel, who left Puren wrecked, who struck down Penco after he had won so many battles. But the chaotic, contrary heavens, surrounded by victories and triumphs put me at your feet, where I now beg for a quick end to my life. If you are drawn to vengeance, it is enough that I should lose my life to you.

“If my cause is not just, remember that he who forgives has more true strength. Calm down your heated hearts in which a mighty anger rages – if you have decided to take my life, that would be an act of piety. But do not think that when I die at your hands the state will lack a head. There will be 1,000 other Caupolicáns, though none so wretched as me – and then see

the Araucanians: I am the least soldier among them. It would be folly to tempt Providence again, as it has already thrown you down this slippery slope.

“Much as you conquer, restrain your rage and your destructive urges. Anger tests a man’s strength, and to forgive anger wreaks the vengeance of generosity. With my death you will destroy the general peace. Now hold back your savage sword, beneath which is both my bare throat and your fortune. Aspire to more and strive for greater glory; do not drown yourselves in a small pond. All that Fortune desires here is that you make good use of it. Recognise the time; see how lucky you are to have me in your power where I am an asset to you. If you execute me you will just have a dead body which will gain you nothing.

“Oh captain, if my wretched head can satisfy you, here is my neck – on which your sword, you can finish off my wretched life. But if the one who brings on death leaves a life unforgiven, he will disrupt universal peace. And since you have seen for yourselves, that both as a free man and a prisoner, in public and in private, I am feared and respected by my soldiers, and all subjected to my will – I want to establish here the law of Christ and, having laid down my arms, I promise you that all the land under my control will give allegiance to King Philip.

“Keep me securely imprisoned until you have done all you can, for I know that the army and the Senate will approve what I propose. If this does not work out I am willing to die. Take what course you choose – I am prepared for either outcome.”

The Indian said no more, just looked at them calmly, awaiting their reply; silently he begged, with equal intensity, for a dignified life or a rapid death. But much as adverse Fortune tried to strike him down, it could not: although defeated, and a prisoner, he maintained a grave dignity. Then he was publicly condemned to be impaled and killed by arrows. Yet neither death nor the extremity of pain made any difference to his demeanour: never at any time, for all its vicissitudes, could Fortune change his face.

But God, wielding his powerful hand, changed him in a moment as with the fire of faith and recognition he asked to be baptized and become a Christian. *This was both a pitiful spectacle and an occasion of great happiness for the Castilian people*, who surrounded him admiringly; but it struck terror into the barbarians present there. On that sad but happy day, they baptized him with solemnity and in the very short time available, instructed him in the true faith, surrounded by a big company of well-armed men who took him to undergo his decreed death – with the hope of a better life thereafter.

The executioner dragged him along naked, barefoot, bearing two heavy chains, by a knotted rope around his neck, surrounded by soldiers and other people – seeing what was happening, and wondering whether it was possible: though right before their eyes, it was scarcely credible.

In this way they reached the wooden platform which stood a bow-shot from the assembly in

the midst of the raised ground, visible from all sides. With his customary diligence, without flinching or showing any emotion, he climbed the scaffold confidently – as if he had been freed from prison. He reached its highest point turning his calm face left and right. As he stood there, motionless, a great multitude watched the incredible spectacle, thinking it both marvellous and terrifying that Fortune could do as it did.

Caupolicán was taken to the stake where the frightful sentence was to be carried out. The expression on his face suggested that he considered this terrible moment to be nothing, as he said: “since Fate, and my destiny, have prepared my death, I beg that no one will grieve over it, if it is the last one.”

Then the diligent executioner arrived: a black man, badly attired. He came to the barbarian to deal the ordained blow. Although Caupolicán had suffered great affronts with a patient face and soul, he could not bear this indignity, though it was his last. He spoke in a high voice:

“How is it that in Christianity among honest hearts, something so abnormal should be allowed – that I, distinguished as I am, should be executed by such a despicable hand? It is enough that the most guilty should die, and assuage their guilt with their lives; this applies to me: killing me is inhuman vindictiveness, not punishment for wrongdoing. Is there not one sword amongst all those drawn to fight against me which, to put us out of our colossal misery, could cut me down with one clean blow? Although you have tried it today in so many different ways, such a brutal hand cannot touch great General Caupolicán.”

Having said that, he raised his right foot (although this was impeded by chains) and kicked the executioner so hard that he went rolling down the long slope, badly injured. They reprimanded Caupolicán for that impulsive deed. Then when the anger had subsided they exerted a little effort and impaled him with a sharp stake.

Its point ruptured his entrails and pierced his flesh, but was not enough to bring him down; did not bat an eyelid, but remained quite calm, as if he had been placed in a sanctuary. Then six skilful archers, who stood at the ready thirty paces from their target, shot wide of the mark; though excellent shots, they recoiled from firing on a man of such great authority and renown.

But cruel Fortune, which had as yet intervened so little, now threw herself into the fray and forced the trajectories. In a flash, without leaving any part untouched, a hundred arrows pierced his breast. And so this great spirit, which could not be broken by lesser wounds, was struck down.

The story of this gallant barbarian’s fate would surely move the most hardened listener to tears. *I took part in the conquest of that remote people, hitherto unknown. I was not present at that execution, sir; but if I had been, I would have put a stop to it.* His eyes remained open, suggesting that he was still alive; that ugly death could not disfigure him. So great was the

awe in which his people held him, that they did not dare to cease respecting him, nor was there anyone so bold as not to feel fear of him.

Reports of the unexpected, ignominious death spread like wildfire, causing turmoil. Then the crowd, incredulous, agitated, agog with curiosity, rushed with desperate hearts to see if he really was dead. So many were those coming down that the spacious plain was packed solid with heaving bodies. They could not believe their eyes without touching him with their hands; and even when they had touched it still felt like dream or fantasy.

Neither the frightful death, perpetrated through fear of the people, nor the loss of such an eminent man (on whom our hopes were founded) intimidated anybody. Provoked by this outrage, full of rage, they yearned for cruel satisfaction – some for vengeance for the affront and the ignominy, others simply desiring the badges of office. Before delay could calm down the restive people, they generated strength and passion for war, inciting the whole country to fury.

To describe in full the courage of Tucapel, Rengo and Lepomande, Orompello, Lincoya and Lebopia, Puren, Cayocupil and Mareande would merit a far greater book than this; each one of them could claim to be the greatest leader of that people.

But the prudent and wise Chief Colocolo, seeing the danger of many competitors and recognising that few could meet this great challenge, asserted his long established authority, declaring them to be diligent messengers. He ordered them to assemble for a consultation in a distant, secret place. Those who wanted to speed things up then prepared to assemble; many, suspicious of delay, put on the pressure. Others, to straighten the path, did not hold back from committing themselves, unflinchingly following one man, the sage Colocolo. It was agreed that they should travel light, silently, so that the enemy would have no idea about this new gathering: it happened to consist of Indians who ‘accepted’ the peace treaty with a false show of humility and contrition.

The chosen place was in a spacious, well-hidden valley. The Senate was convened; among them, Tucapel was determined to get elected, by hook or by crook, while others, with less foundation, aired their pregnant thoughts of power. New dissensions arose, and there was massive friction; hearts were boiling with ambition, old animosities and rivalries resurfaced. Different plans and opinions circulated without any sign of a consensus, each one baring his delirium, or his muscle and will power.

As I said, the chiefs and nobles, with all their accoutrements, entered this council, according to their status. Colocolo, shrewd old man, seeing their ashen faces, although he was standing in the rear, projected his voice to the front.

But if you will bear with me sir, before I tell you about Colocolo I want to take another route, and focus on our direction – concentrate on our side. Although there is much more I would like to tell you, my chosen subject alone is enough to exhaust my voice, already tired out by

describing the essential details here. If you will allow me, I would like (because I have touched on it already) to concentrate on Don Garcia, whose achievements are substantial; in that turbulent realm, he reformed the people, established justice and good government in the land.

Having passed the fertile plain of Villarrica, to the south of the great volcano, forged by Vulcan, which contained a seething fire – turning to the right, he finally reached the broad lake and the great desert, scene of Valdivia's demise. He reached his goal without easing his pace. There arrived large numbers of people from most of the cities, talking of conquests (and working days), and so the growing bellicose tumult resounded as a deafening hubbub, striking terror into the immediate vicinity. Seized by the light wind and scattered widely, the hard, jarring accents of the outlying Indians assaulted the ears; these restive people made a sound of terror like fearful sheep menaced by the cry of the wolf.

Never did the dark, shadowy veil of clouds suddenly gathered, nor the bolt of lightning, thundering down, ripping the sky, enveloped in a raging flame – nor an earthquake, when it made the ground tremble, disturb and terrify the people as much as did the horrendous strife of war, striking terror through the land.

Some took desperate measures and opted for scorched earth, destroying food and livestock; others plundered land and villages to deprive the chiefs of their support; some dishonoured the noble leaders by seizing their daughters, and perpetrating other atrocities – without regard for sex, territory or estates. Disorder and discontent grew as the news spread, as they were convinced of the certainty underlying their sad fears. It was only their salvation that seemed uncertain; and that awareness tormented them; they all ran screaming hither and thither, believing that they would be annihilated.

But then the reckless fear which poured forth the multitude cleared a space where reason could find entry; the stunned people gathered to consider the danger of total disaster, and discuss counter-measures.

At the diverse assembly was Tunconabal – an eloquent soldier, a person of courage and intelligence, brought up in the old Araucanian school; faced with certain banishment from his land and people, he opted for guerrilla warfare. Seeing the fear and confusion in the various people, without hearing the sound of a trumpet, without seeing anyone, his voice frightened everyone. Then all the noble company was assembled in a suitable place. When the noise and altercations had subsided he presented his case:

“It is right, friends that I tell you of the dangerous corner in which we find ourselves, because of this perfidious enemy we find at our gates. Then fear, which wears us down, compels us giving him free entry and a plain path to the tyrant, and surrender our liberty. What moated wall, what parapet, what army or city, what castle could you retire to in this emergency which would be strong enough to resist them for an hour? If you want to show a brave face and a

strong heart we will offer them the naked blade, since this sudden fury seizes us without arms, captains or discipline.

“These bearded monsters, usurpers of universal good, are powerful and invincible in all their enterprises; they throw out rays which make horrible noises, fight mounted on running animals – grand and fearless, ruled by mind and soul. And since we have no defence against their weapons and their ferocity, either in terms of forces or of fortifications, we must replace our slackness with diligence and industry, and prevent a bad future by acting in time. You can play for time by giving an impression of domestic calm; you will promise them a safe passage, as to a friendly, neighbouring nation – just making the promise will do no harm to anyone. *If we take advantage of this breathing-space to remove our clothing, provisions and livestock to the remotest corners of the mountains, leaving behind the poorest of effects, they will think this country is an inhospitable desert inhabited by poor and wretched people.*

“Seeing this land to be a poor prize, those insatiable vultures will doubtless change their thoughts and abandon their enterprise as useless. The lack of forces and fortifications will throw them off balance: with only patches of scrubland as landmarks, they will not be able to manoeuvre so quickly. You hold the narrow pass of Ancud, hemmed in by rocks and crags; natural objects impede movement. Because of the extreme roughness of this country, they cannot ride their horses over it and those lightweight birds will find it hard to take flight.

“Once they have arrived here, I think it beyond doubt that seeing such a high, dangerous mountain will counter their thrust and that they will turn back. And if they want to look for some detour, it will be essential for them to turn away from here. If they thinking this area is worthless, they will abandon it, to be absolved from their intolerable arrogance.

“Although liberty (and my life) know that there is danger in this course, I want us to meet them on this path with a company of poor, wretched peasants, pretending to be ignorant and contented, shabbily dressed, offering miserable gifts – from which the enemy will deduce the extent of our suffering.

“Perhaps, seeing the hard work and the meagre rewards that they could hope from this poverty, the sterile land, the shabby tribute, the parlous state of the people – this will blunt their resolve – which is to look for estates and wealth. With skill and artifice we can make them redirect their plans.”

The Indian had scarcely completed his speech when a cry arose among his people, expressing approval, with no dissenting voices. And so his suggestion was put into effect, the furniture, provisions and livestock removed.

The Spaniards, always fast, were already there. Having covered the maximum distance for a day, they set a goal of the same distance for the next day. Having started marching at dawn, they sustained their pace. *I will tell you all about this (if you're not tired of it) in the next canto.*

Canto XXXV

(The Spaniards arrive in quest of new territory. Tunconabala confronts them at the pass; he tries to persuade them to turn back but seeing this does not work, offers them a guide – who leads them down great precipices where terrible struggles occur.)

What hills are there that self-interest does not flatten? What difficulties are there which it cannot surmount? What proud heart, what strong will is not infected and corrupted by it? It destroys the fabric of human life; there is no order which it does not alter and interrupt, no narrow entry or closed door which it cannot lay open. It can sever the strongest relationship bonds – turn friendship into enmity and grateful love to hatred – inventor of disasters and evils. It betrays reason, changes fate, makes ice hot and fire cold, thrusts rivers down to the coast.

So the soldiers pressed on – facing a thousand dangers and failures across deep gulfs and unexplored oceans, until they reached the final, unexplored parts. Incited by greed, they contemplated how much was contained in the immense circle of the earth. I have explained how Don Garcia had arrived with a happy company, charged to reconnoitre the extremities of Chile, through which no explorer had hitherto passed. This is what he said, having set foot in the middle of the line which divides the two new worlds:

“We are a Nation whose invincible hearts accept no shackles. We surmount insufferable dangers and travails; neither angry horses, contrary winds, nor 1,000 other obstacles – impossible for others, nor the power of the stars and the elements have prevented you from reaching the end of the earth. You will see another new world, which until now the heavens have kept concealed. Opening up this hard road has been allowed to your arms alone: be assured of the reward which Fortune has promised you for your efforts – being the initiators of such a great enterprise you can be great Lords with limitless power.

“If you are in search of the pinnacles of fame, compare your exploits with those of old: yours will hold the first place. Not fitting into the two big worlds, you come to conquer a third where, untrammelled, you can expand your mighty souls. And since the time is ripe and there is little need to give reasons, I do not wish to hold you back by wasting time on speeches. Go: take possession of these new provinces and regions, and the great glory and riches which Fortune has promised for your efforts.”

Then the whole group of men, standing round chattering freely, turned to enter the new land where no foreign foot had yet trodden. At a well-ordered pace, by a narrow path hard to follow, in single file, the march began. We travelled for several days without a track, aided only by the sun – opening passes and closed tracks, finishing at the top of sheer cliffs. The cheating guides took us to impasses from which it seemed impossible either to turn back or to go forward. Already the sun had taken its course to the west and given the world four turns, heating the damp brow of the fish – when, at the bottom of a steep hill, we suddenly saw ten

Indians going through the thick scrub, close together – tanned by air, water and sun, with thick, long hair, wearing short loincloths of tight-fitting rope, big-chested and thick-set, eyes afire and nails uncut, sturdy peasants with proud features and bearing.

A tough old man came to the front, dressed in a cloak of red sackcloth which proclaimed the depths of poverty. As I have said before, he was called Tunconabal, who tried to change our designs and opinions with false counsels and reasons. We were then upon them, suspecting that they were fugitive mountain people. But taking a short cut upwards, reaching the foot of a high crag down which a rocky stream flowed, they looked at us without suspicion – having put their bows and arrows on the ground. Then the old man, in a voice pitched to our interpreter, said:

“Oh unhappy people – led to these mountains on false pretenses, where even the serpent and vicious vermin can hardly sustain life, and where the barbarian son is nourished on wild roots. What sinister information has incited your invincible souls!? What malicious advice has made you attempt the impossible? Stop your rash action: although this enterprise is admirable it is difficult and terrible. Through deception you will be condemned to a miserable death. Even if you do not meet any war parties to obstruct your passage, you will find one mountain range after another, one thicket, then another, then a hundred more. The terrain is rough from lack of grass and other vegetation; the polluted air does not allow any organism to live.

“Although you now see me as a mere brute reduced to the state of a wild man, know that I was once a soldier and bore arms. In the name of the law I professed, seeing that the army was lost, pity moved me to advise them that without passing here we should turn back. These desert lands go on as far as the Antarctic, and could be the end, the sepulchre of all your prosperous days. Look at the faces of all those who are inured to it, and the food it scarcely yields, giving us a wretched subsistence.”

With these words, he took from a load of seaweed, woven into a nest, various mountain fruits – hard, green, wild, tasteless, dried flesh of wild plants, and other peasant foods, sun-dried lobsters and lizards, with a thousand varieties of nasty bugs. We must admire the sterling qualities of that impressive barbarian people – their great robustness, proud demeanour and intractable nature. We must marvel at the density and roughness of the mountains, and the fruits of that wretched soil – a desolate, barren, underpopulated land so out of contact with any neighbours. We asked the old man if the land for which we were heading was mountainous; with a smile he replied that it was bitter, hard and deadening: as the mountains were getting higher, it was headstrong folly to try and break through such dense undergrowth, put there to guard the secrets of nature. But seeing our ambition, which was to pass ever onward, and that his false, malicious advice was not enough to turn us back, he stopped for a while to think. Then with a tender, affectionate air, seeming sad, he stated that he knew a more accessible path. On the westerly slope of the mountain were signs of old, stunted grass through which people could pass safely, although the land was extensive and depopulated. The old man gave us a practical and reliable guide to this area.

Our men carefully heeded his words, but some were dubious. The bright presents he received seemed odd – a cotton cloak dyed red, and a thick fox tail dyed in fifteen different colours, with twelve tinkling bells attached. They gratefully received the presents from the old man and prized them like jewels. When the requested guide came we were largely prepared, so soon set off. After following the Indian for two days, then left him at the Mission and took another path.

He was always telling us about the great riches, abundant livestock, great populations, expanding those narrow hearts with fabrications, such as “When Phoebus has made six circuits of this region, I promise you, on my life, to satisfy your appetite.”

He knew how to appeal to our appetite, his vain talk of riches firing our lively spirits. The hills, mountains, crags and rough terrain became smooth paths; the toil and danger did not hold us back. We went on, without caring for basic necessities, up high hills, down deep valleys, along mountain ranges – imagining enormous fantasies. And so, proud, happy and contented, we spent the first three days. But on the fourth, at daybreak, the lying guide left us: that bad sign, that confirmation of suspicion, disturbed the most stalwart souls – as the deception was discovered and the bitter travails doubled. But although we were trackless in the desert, beset by great danger, we did not flinch – pressing on, discovering ever more desolate scrubland. Some of us opened up a path through the dense undergrowth with axes and machetes, while others with pikes and hoes, broke up the rocks and the deeply rooted brushwood, so that the harassed, suspicious horses could take their fearful steps.

Never did nature make a path with so many obstacles for human beings, nor the sovereign skies stunt the growth of the trees, nor was there ever such undergrowth between rocks and marshes. It felt as if this road were defended by brambles, scrub and rooted trees. Even the sky was transformed into something else: the light was faint and we were hedged in by dark, menacing clouds, day turning into shadowy night and, loaded with hailstones and storms, furiously defended the path. The sky was more of an adversary than all the toil and danger of the land.

Some, buried in the deep thickets, cried for help. Others, bogged down in the marshes, yelled out; some climbed, while others turned their lacerated feet, hands and faces, hearing voices here and there, in vain – unable to help or lend a hand. It was pitiful to hear the cries, see the impediments and the obstructions, the horses fallen lifeless, feet severed from legs, arms bloodstained, our plain, fragile clothing shredded on the brambles, barefoot and naked, with only our arms, bathed in blood, sweat and mud. And besides the insufferable toil we lacked food and drink; wretched, nagging hunger tightened the knots of torment. Dubious good and undeniable harm drained strength and stifled breath, forcing all the life out of tired limbs in cold sweats. But then, consideration of the glory that the effort assured, strengthening the heart and limbs, shrank every difficulty. The contrast between the two contraries made things easier – for courage shows itself most strongly when the force of contraries grows. And so our army, nourished on hope alone, passed with pure arms, discovering the cloudy sky they desired. We went through the undergrowth and trees, negotiating their intricate roots to gain

an open path. And in that part, blocking the entry of the light, flattening the hard crags and the heights of the steep slopes, the thick, congealed mist which stood in opposition, exhaling its thick, damp vapour, thinned out so as to offer visibility. We wasted seven days opening up the blocked path with hard steel; we could not relax our weary bodies. On the following day we discovered, at the foot of the mountain, the fertile plain of Ancud and beneath its treacherous slope a wide lake and river.

There was an extensive archipelago, consisting of innumerable delightful islands and crossing between them, fast gondolas and pirogues. The mariners never panicked in the midst of those rolling waves: they were as happy to see the open passages as were we to see the open road.

Then, kneeling down, full of new pleasure and gentleness, we gave thanks to God that we had escaped from peril and misadventure and, elated at our big success, forgot our exhaustion. With high hopes and spirits we marched into the pleasant plain. The infirm, the wounded, the crippled, the lame, the one-armed, the weak, the disabled, the naked, the unshod, the fractured, the faint, the weak, the starving, became healthy, brave and confident, suffused with new strength and courage, with all the world at their feet, and the heavens easy to conquer.

But in the midst of all this effort, on the river bed and in the mountainous parts, we found wild strawberries which make delicious wine. Although unripe they had a marvellous taste; even Manna from heaven and the cauldrons of Egypt could not have stimulated our appetites more. That band of locusts, sometimes sent as a plague on humanity, did not leave a grain from the fertile, ripened ears. Divided into teams, our men crossed the broad plain, and left it despoiled of fruit, roots and leaves.

Some ravenously ate the fruit in fistfuls; others gobbled up roots and leaves, not waiting to pick them one by one – some dodged distributing food to the whole company – looking for some hidden parts where they could eat the roots they had torn off with their rapacious nails.

They were like a gaggle of chickens released from their enclosure into an open field, looking for wheat from the wasted crops: when scavenging with feet and beaks, some of them find the buried grains, and seizing them, take to flight, pursued by the others. Having snatched a good portion, and harried hither and thither, they flee to some part where they can eat in private. They have no concept of sharing; if they have any sense of charity, it does not extend to those closest to them.

When we had savoured these rustic foods, there came a curved, lightweight gondola, propelled by twelve large oars, which ploughed along the river. When they saw it, the crowd on the river bank jumped up, without caution, but with a show of friendship.

But if you want to know who these people were, and how they came to arrive there, I won't tell you right now, as that would break the main thread of the narrative. *This would be a good point to pause, for me to recover and for you to find it easier to listen to me.*

Canto XXXVI

(The chief disembarks from the boat and offers the Spaniards all they need for their voyage – his defeat when he pursues them; the draining of the archipelago gives them a short cut. Don Alonso makes the crossing in a pirogue with twelve soldiers; they reach the lodgings and from there take the path to the Imperial City.)

Those who travel worldwide see much which people treat as fabrications; however marvellous they are, it is usually wiser to play them down. But although it is good that the sceptical keep quiet and I do not want to stick my neck out, I will say that I found more truth on earth than can be said to go up to heaven.

I had retired into these parts, beyond our boundaries, which as yet all false caution, deception and art had not uncovered. But putting this aside I wanted to turn quickly to the boat crammed with people rowing strongly to the attack in the arena. Among them was a personable young man, frizzy-haired and dark-skinned, but white-faced. There were 15 people behind him and he appeared to be the leader. Solemnly but modestly, he joined our happy company, and greeted us courteously, saying the following:

“Men or rustic Gods, born in these sacred bushes and mountains, engendered by the stars from their closed and rugged entrails. Through what quirk of fortune have you come here by such strange roads and paths; how did you reach our poverty-stricken corners free from confusion and quarrelling? If you are looking for a more spacious region and you need anything for the pursuit of this goal, all comforts and services will be freely given en route by the local people.

“If you want to settle here we will give you land. If the mountains please you more, we will give you a safe conduct there. Whether you want friendship or war we can offer them both in equal measure; but I would advise you to accept peace and our friendship.”

The grace and charm of the gallant young man was agreeable, as was the bizarre terminology he used to speak to us. The open offer of hospitality was impressive, as were the good looks and build of the people: white, well put-together, well-proportioned, dressed in cloaks and loose tunics. Their heads were covered and adorned with conical caps, the points pulled back and knocked down, tightly adjusted to their temples. They were made of fine, curly wool; a swirling blaze of colours made a great display, proclaiming the cold climate of the land. We gave thanks for the offer and the goodwill that was shown, also giving our assurance that everything would be straightened out for them. But feeling at last the pangs of hunger, we asked for food and drink – with a promise to pay.

Then speedily and diligently, seeing the great need, he ordered his people to seize the contents of the gondola and distribute it among that hungry company – without accepting any payment and no-one expecting thanks for it.

Having exerted themselves in this way and also having raised their hopes, they began to march along the river bank – in good order according to our custom. After covering a full league, we agreed to set up our camp on the first stretch of land which seemed suitable. Scarcely had we put up our tents and set our effects in place when, from different directions, cutting through the foaming waters, came three fast pirogues laden with maize, fruit and fish, unstintingly refreshing our exhausted men. The sincere goodness and warmth of the simple folk of those lands suggested that greed had not penetrated these mountains; neither had malice, rapacity and injustice (ordinary food for wars) contaminated these parts, nor had Natural Law been distorted.

But by opening up the way with our customary arrogance, we destroyed everything in our path and gave them ample cause for resentment. By corrupting their old customs, ruining them with new abuses, we planted the flag of greed there more certainly than anywhere else.

That night passed; then came the day for travelling through the islands. Two chiefs arrived to celebrate our arrival with a magnificent gift of provisions, an alpaca and two vicunas, hunted in the mountains by fingernails alone. They looked at these strangers in suspense and admiration – white, blond, thickset and bearded, speaking a strange language, wearing strange clothes. They admired the bold horses, controlled in the midst of the fury. But they were terrified by the sound of firearms.

We headed south alongside the twisting river, following the fall from the narrows, which revealed the strata of the land. But whatever distance we covered, the great archipelago seemed to expand, revealing a large number of populated islands scattered on the horizon, a. Many chiefs came in our path, to see us as if we were some miracle. Not one of them was so mean that he did not bring some gift; there were big vases made of mother-of-pearl, animal skins, bows and quivers, horns, exotic painted shells.

I who have always been friendly and eager to unearth the unknown, dragged along by so many toils, the strength of my star bore me along, in the form of a young man in a fast gondola, to see the main island and its people. I saw the Indians and their houses, with humble floors and roofs; I saw the trees and cultivated plants, fruits, grains and vegetables and noted the distinguishing features, the customs they observed, and the legal system under which they lived. We visited two other islands, passing their populous and fertile banks, and went round several others, surrounded by domestic gondolas. I was made aware of many marvels never seen before, until it was night and the fresh wind bore me to safety on the shore.

Then our detachment travelled for another day, which was the third in our voyage. Having marched for three hours, we finally found the point where the great lake flowed into the sea, by a deep, fast channel which because of its current and breadth, restricted our progress. A great sadness fell upon us, a great cloud over the soul and face of our people, seeing our path

assaulted by that great flooding torrent; none of the horses in harness could prevail against that maelstrom, nor could the slender pirogue negotiate it.

In view of the excessive and intolerable effort, turning back was out of the question: it seemed impossible to assure anybody's life. It was the height of folly to have embarked on this course against all sound advice. Seeing our distress, a young Indian, a bit Latin-looking, offered to guide us to another, better path. Our happiness at this news was overwhelming. We gathered to take the route which the stern winter had also taken – to the southern regions, and received strong signals.

But I, whose real design was to see the land at the end of that day – with ten companions, brave and hardy, negotiated the mighty stream, just through the strength of our arms. We reached the sandy shore without speaking of or noticing the danger; the path was rough and perilous, sometimes choked with undergrowth.

Seeing that the enterprise was pretty dubious, and that it would be madness to go on from here, we then turned the pirogue to cross the raging waters. But to satisfy my urge to put my best foot forward, pretending that this area was somewhere vital for the explorer, I ran half a mile ahead in order to make an inscription which I thought would be an adequate signal. With a knife, I carved my message into the bark of the biggest tree I could find: *Here came, where no other has come, Don Alonso de Ercilla, first to disembark from a small boat – who with ten companions negotiated the torrent in February 1558, returning at 2 am the next day, to the company they had left.*

We returned to camp, where the company was awaiting our arrival so that it could resume. The harsh winter had begun. With the friendly Indian as their guide, the happy band pushed on: although the route was hard, the memory of the past made it seem easy.

The barbarous islander kept his promise (about which he had always been consistent) and as I said, got us out of this difficult country through a thick wood. We fled along this path as far and fast as our energies would allow; although the toil was heavy it was our duty to fend off attacks. We reached La Imperial, where we were given hospitality by the generous neighbours in the form of various presents of food, which overloaded even our greedy stomachs. Then we saw feasting so many bright young men, who got together and made a challenge for each one of them to show his prowess. The fiesta caused an unpremeditated incident, and the speed of judgment was such that it was already on the cards: a knife for the throat. The horrendous crime gained public notoriety; for the sword thus used was never drawn without good reason.

This event was a major cause of my exile, keeping me a long-term prisoner in order to remedy this mistake; but it was also increased, not for that (armed with patience and cold steel) it was lacking in any action or foray, serving as the frontier between night and day. There were bloody skirmishes, scuffles and ambushes, assaults and deferred battles, rare

deceptive stratagems, cunning ploys never used before which, although they gained advantages, put us into some tight corners.

But after the assault on the watchtower of Quipeo, and the ensuing battle in which so much armament was destroyed, so much barbarian blood spilled, the fortifications round the site and the wall speeded up my departure. The offensive, bolder every day, always stimulated and gnawed away at me. In a big ship, equipped with high sails, I left this inhospitable land, which without recompense had cost me so much in blood, sweat and tears. The south wind propelled it from the rear, so we were propelled along the coast, sometimes inundated, until we reached the famous port of Callao. I stayed there until the people arrived from the great Marañon, where that day Lope de Aguirre, more callous than Nero and Herod, put to the sword so many of his friends, together with his dear daughter – just for the sake of killing. And although he had travelled over 2,000 miles of sometimes unpopulated country, he then pursued his route by sea, accustomed as he was to greater speed. He reached Panama where that same day the news had arrived of the tyrant's defeat and death, rendering my efforts in vain. I was kept on land because of an acute illness, but then, as I recovered, touching on the Terceras (Canaries?) I came to Spain, where I did not stay for very long – going to France, Italy and Germany, Silesia, Moravia, Bosnia, over the Danube to Pannonia.

I passed through these regions and others by difficult roads, dealt with various nations. I saw peculiar places and things, strange conditions, land and sea animals, some lands deprived of rainfall, others condemned to eternal flooding.

How did I come to deviate from my primary purpose? Why did I forget my promise to tell you the tale of Arauco in full? I want to return to the main theme, if your taste for it has not been saturated – but I will try to tell you some desirable things that will be valid as excuses. Let's take a look at the conference convened by those distinguished captains, and the parts I attended, where there were great disagreements, until a consensus was finally reached; and then to the assaults, skirmishes and battles; here is the right place to describe them. What shall I do, with my mind and senses – exploring the remotest regions, wars with unknown Indians, and imagine here our men, stumbling with their weapons, feeling the bitter clangour of war battering their ears, and all the land blazing with fury. I see all Spain agitated, intoxicated with its victories, and anxious France forced to lower its arrogant banners. Going into Italy and Germany I hear the sonorous bells of doom resounding, and the gathering, among all nations, of men, equipment, arms and munitions.

To describe such a great movement and the bellicose din is an essential task, demanding new breath, new energy, and to be approved by you, Sir. But as my headstrong courage which put me in this gulf was assisted by yourself, I am now confident of reaching port with my tired ship. *If my humble style and composition handicaps my voice, the material assures me that it will be heard attentively. Meanwhile, sir, it will be sound judgment on your part (since such a great day is commencing) that you rest your unquiet spirit until I can put some new strength into my storytelling.*

Canto XXXVII

(This final canto discusses human rights issues in wars, and describes King Philip's takeover of Portugal, together with the requests he made to the Portuguese in order to justify his military action.)

I here depict the fury of the Spanish people, moved by just anger and goals, and the rights of the King of Portugal, who resorted to sanguinary action – the peace, the union, the Christian bond converted to bloody discord, the lances cast furiously hither and thither – at kindred breasts.

War originated in heaven; but when transferred to human genes, it was corrupted by our nature. Peace is preserved, and human insolence curbed, by war. Sometimes God afflicts the world with it as a form of punishment and correction. By that means it curbs the pride of arrogant rebels and sets boundaries on maniac ambition. War is a fundamental right of any people; military order and discipline conserves states and upholds constitutions. But war is unjust if it deviates from the goals of peace – when it is started for revenge, out of blind fury or self-interest. If the people are at peace, their calm should only be disturbed if it is generally in the public interest: in no way should a single limb break the peace and unity of a whole body. As we profess a brotherhood and a bond with God, and were put in charge of Christ, in the Last Judgement the general peace and bond cannot be undone, unless it is for the public good, and the authority of the King is its defender.

Then like an angel without sin, in view of the universal cause, the soldier can take up arms and direct his anger at the enemy, But if any selfish ends temper his arms, he is weakened, and the arms taken away. Besides putting oneself in danger selfish action is a public affront. When it is permitted in a just war, the irate victors can wound, loot, kill in the campaign, and turn free people into obedient slaves. He who is lord and owner of life will have all he wants from the conquered; all should be conceded to the victor.

And then at all times, on all occasions, without any difficulty, battalions and squadrons can be formed; each one can use arms. For the same legitimate reasons it is permissible to do single combat – on foot, on horseback, armed, unarmed, whether in a open field or in an enclosure.

In war the challenge is just, with the intercession of the leader, under whose command the ordered state is placed. But if combat and protest is started by an individual, whether that person be the instigator, or has been provoked, such action is illicit, unjust, and to be condemned. Neither does it settle grievances, nor is its justice vindicated by the use of force to implement a decision. I sometimes see that, for obscure reasons, he who was the culprit emerges as the conqueror.

The bloody justice of arms is rightly to be condemned, as we can see its disastrous end

ordained by the highest providence. The outcome, whether sad or happy, does not make the cause good or bad, nor in any instance is justice subject to the vagaries of fortune. I would add that a diligent soldier has no obligation to enquire as to whether a war is legitimate, and whether it is being justly or unjustly pursued. Only the King, who as head of state has the obedient service of his people, can determine the public cause. From the King hangs the weight of war and heavy duty; the amount of harm and damage done is his responsibility, as the one who controls his men. I greatly admire anyone who tries to justify armed action before giving free rein to its fury – one who is not moved by greed and ambition.

This is exactly how King Philip has now taken up arms, justly, in defence of the laws of humanity, to honour a heavy obligation. He is not claiming that might is right, nor is he motivated just by the desire to reign; his sceptre and his monarchy will go on until the sun claims his life. But free from ambition and avarice (which corrupts and infects some people), in the name of justice and right, he goes against the rebel kingdom, and in spite of malice which would deny him and cripple his crown he wants to kick the door open and make a passage for the entry of reason.

Though moved by just indignation, concealing his strength and power, he suspends his arm on high, deferring the remedy of blood and suffering with prudence and soul. Justifying his sword and his desire in this way, he will then break the backbone of the proud rebels. He seized by force and an irate hand the proud necks of the traitors, cutting to pieces the powerful fleet of the Gallic pirates. With just rigour and fury he slew his general Felipe Strozi and put all his men to the sword – as disturbers of the peace. This blood – of perfidious enemies, will not besmirch his record of clemency: if an offence and an outrage is grave, then he who punishes it is clement and pious. *To forgive evil is to give licence for greater harm to follow it; it is just as cruel to forgive everything as to forgive nothing.* It is not true compassion to forgive, if rigour is imperative; he who tackles and punishes present evil curtails cruelty in the future. Whoever does not prevent evil consents to it, and could be called a participant – he who forgives public evils corrupts the state. I do not want to say that clemency is not a great thing, and an inestimable virtue – a glorious gesture laudable in the most powerful. But general peace, so essential, cannot last without justice, rewards and punishments. When administered at the right time, these sustain governments. However, not all the excess and evil which exist can be remedied or punished, even when they should be. Evil cannot always be cleaned out or finished off.

A wise prince knows he has a great obligation to forgive; forgiveness is a powerful medicine which gets to the bottom of many grievances. Clemency towards enemies abates hatred and indignation, engenders devotion, makes friends, and gains the affection of the people; constant severity of punishment makes a prince defamed and detested; *it is the duty of kings and princes to blunt the sword of law.* One could say that concealing past evils is of no avail if it does not remove evil from the heart, and render it unable to perpetrate new insults and sins. Fear of punishment is an obvious thing to repress damaged souls; seeing the evil-doer bound to the stake corrects evil and reforms the malefactor.

Punishment should not be administered as if by a crude, ignorant surgeon: when the evil is light and the wound is small, he puts his cutting edge into healthy flesh, and with powerful steel, wounds that which would have healed if he had not touched it; the cure is no good if it is harder and worse than the original ailment. Some argumentative person will say that I am contradicting myself: it is a virtue to punish when public penalties are necessary. But it is also virtuous for the powerful person to forgive the offence of the ungrateful person and the enemy – if the scope of the offence is restricted, or if it is obvious that the dispute in question could be settled without penal measures.

I see that I am darting from point to point; time is short and there is a mass of material to deal with. Instead of things getting easier, the load on my tired shoulders is heavier than ever. And to resume from here, turning to that which is less important to me, but more incumbent on me, I want to turn my pen to Portugal, and make here a brief summary and digest: why is it, o Portuguese, that you are deluded, turning your obstinate chests and strive to violate law and justice with a force which all condemn? Does not common peace and public need, a sense of duty, religion and naturalness, the power and grandeur of King Philip move your wounded souls?

Look at the largesse that we have offered you land, liberty and extension of rights – not induced by force, but with the assistance of our forces. Almost murmuring, he has held back from using armed force, convincing you by reason like a father who, exercising clemency, reduces his rebellious son to obedience. What blind pretension, what delusion, what stupid headstrong passion wrecks your sense of position and leaves your minds in shreds? – that one united nation, signalled by the Sacrament and the cross of Christ, has turned to murderous acts, inflicting wounds on its own entrails! The same emblems and entrails come out of different camps, bringing in 1,000 nations who shed innocent blood and introduced pestiferous vice, leaving Catholic Spain infected with its plague.

Eternal Father, I crave your grace and favour, begging you to move my hand, as all moves by you and for you, so that I give both the Portuguese and the Spaniards their due, without deviating or detracting from what is fair because of personal bias. As you know my dedication, and the just zeal by which I am moved, and that you are the source of all good actions and intentions – whose fulfilment is due to you – give me strength, give me reasons to guide my pen which ventures, so rashly and so poorly equipped, into this mammoth task.

King Sebastian of Portugal was impelled by juvenile ardour to smash his African adversaries and suppress pagan authority, with the promise of free entry, and to seize wealth, power and people from this kingdom. But King Philip saw through his nephew's impulsive manoeuvres and cancelled the ill-conceived plan with the advice of a true father. Thinking to move him away from the path to catastrophe, he suggested they should have a conference at Guadeloupe. But neither strong arguments, nor the request and the persuasive power of a great uncle, nor a multitude of drawbacks could persuade him to take one step backwards, nor the power of a single act of will on so many people – from the fickle Goddess, desirous of making the world turn – that the proud young man, promising that which was blocked by

sensible fear, rejecting rational arguments, outraged all his opponents, and acting on his own initiative, brought about his own death and perdition; no advice or warning was enough to counter the decree and the fatal sentence.

Who, even with the clearest voice, could describe this lamentable event – that miserable, bloody end of a day and of a badly governed people: the ruin of an irreparable realm, its ancient fame lost in a single day – all through the wilfulness of a hot-headed young man moved by accident, without reason. Another must tell of that fateful day which exceeds all precedents in sadness and misery: although my pen is steeped in blood, it cannot describe calamities such as this. I want to follow the life I have begun – if heaven will grant me breath; already I feel a great turbulent cloud arming itself.

After the young king rashly attacked the African army, he died in the midst of the blind tumult, struggling in a mountain of carnage which, swaying furiously, overthrew four kings, drowning the fame of such people, messing up the arms of the West.

Then Don Enrique was declared King of Portugal – brother of a cardinal, an ordained priest, devoutly religious, aged and infirm, more set on the next world than this one. Fortune offered the kingdom to him, a person of little life and no successor. Great Philip, on hearing the news of the king's death and seeing Enrique's frailty, and the insecurity of his great estate, as nephew and successor, wanted to declare his rights in an alliance – a merger of the powers of the two kings. With laudable zeal he assembled learned men, strong characters and good Christians, free from self-interest, who obeyed right and their consciences, who did not act in a devious manner: they looked at what should be done if the desired kingdom came to him. Dona Catalina, daughter of the Infante don Duarte claimed a right to the kingdom; Don Antonio also contested the crown and sceptre, but although favoured by the people, he was excluded as being illegitimate.

At those arduous negotiations each delegate spoke in depth. They all stated their opinions freely, without caution, with no respect for anyone, so that at a quiet and opportune time they could make the greatest trouble. If the kingdom was not organised on a rational basis the use of force would be justified. Each one of them saw clearly that the proposed conjunction of laws meant disloyalty to the Pope. It was vital that the one closest to legitimacy be chosen. They preferred an old man to a woman, and someone aged to someone of lower estate – the succession and precedence being a right of blood and not of inheritance. Don Antonio, excluded and separated by human law and divine justice from his cause and rights – was not inclined to violence, nor having any inordinate desire to rule; he only wished for pure justice according to law, reason and nature.

So the justice of his hope for the kingdom was recognised. One could see the great danger in which the country, and the whole of Christendom, was placed. As he was considered well equipped to calm down the instability which had arisen, he was declared in appropriate terms to be the rightful successor.

Through him the rioting and chaos ceased; his declaration put a stop to insults and projected harm. Doing things in the correct way throughout his reign, he governed the kingdom according to the law – as the legitimate, hereditary ruler. He sent a delegation to Don Christobal and presented Philip's proposal. Enrique listened carefully to them, then gave an ambiguous and frivolous reply: the more the obvious justice of the king's case was presented, the more he tried to evade the issue – without raising a quarrel or committing himself.

In view of the expansion of these tangled negotiations, and popular feeling intensifying, Don Philip sent a new delegation with enough power and authority to obtain some resolution from Pedro Giron, Duke of Osuna, together with Doctor Guardiola, to make as stronger petition, in view of the severe damage to peace and order which would come from any delay. Having examined the rights of Don Philip and Dona Catalina, they found them equals in the line of descent; he Enrique's nephew, he his niece; he the old man, she the woman – the king being feared, as greater in estate and of nobler birth, respecting law, custom, facts, and many other factors which related to a right, just, well-balanced and sane heart. There was no disagreement: they declared unanimously that Don Philip was the rightful successor, and that they awarded him the kingdom – with the lands, seas, titles and territories under the Portuguese crown.

Having seen the justice of Don Philip declared by so many powerful men, but suspicious of growing hatred and malice among the common people, and deep-rooted animosity in the hearts of many, it was necessary to sound out public opinion with this news. With great thoroughness, in the interests of law and order and the well-being of the state, they worked on the perplexed minds, like putting water on a fire – trying, by all available means, to calm down public unrest – which had begun to arise among the people, freely, without correction. Don Christobal de Mora, known far and wide as an ace negotiator, was chosen to coordinate this programme. He was born of illustrious Portuguese stock, and the king had the greatest confidence in him as a reliable vassal in whom he could securely place his hopes. Having heard so often of his honest intent, his force and substance, they clearly gave to understand that at the right time, when discord was rife, the King should issue a decree consisting of 1,000 clauses. In order to leave nothing to tempt the troublemakers, and stop blind passion from disturbing the calm of the state, and before the latent hatred surfaced, he selected two top men from his Royal Council to Don Enrique. One was Rodrigo Vazquez, of great substance and experience, renowned for prudence, rectitude, erudition and self-discipline – sound in judgement. The other no less distinguished; Doctor Molina, renowned in letters. Both men were prominent and esteemed.

When Enrique was informed about them, and all his doubts were dispelled, he also informed the Cortes and all the obstinate, impassioned people of his rights. For everyone's benefit he promised to set up laws and grant liberties which would reconcile everyone to his rule. And although the wily old king knew that this suited everyone, he delegated the real executive power to his nephew. The negotiations were strung out, so that those concessions could be manipulated to greater advantage. Then, as the suspicious old monarch stalled the resolution and response – there came the intervention of death, implemented by the author of life, which

was necessary for the successor in view of the hardened, rebellious people assembled to threaten his power.

He had tried many peace offerings with them – approaching the most menacing and obstinate with gifts, promises and shares in property. But the perverse people did not appreciate the proposed benefits; they just showed hostility, closed the door to right and reason.

Who could tell you of such things as I am now to describe to you, so many sonorous trumpets, so many flags fluttering in the wind, the prepared arms of the Spanish and Portuguese bands, the apparatus of war, the battles on land and sea? Amidst the arms and the fury, you will see examples of righteous justice, clemency and magnanimity, perverse and obstinate enmity, liberal largesse which blew up the bag of greed – and other shades and colorations which make writers happy. More, with blood in their veins, sing of today and enrich their numerous verses, since Philip gives them abundant material – an open, fertile and spacious field – as a happy occasion and a good outcome are worth more than fruitless toil like mine, which I have always done dry and in vacuo.

How many lands and nations have I crossed – from the frozen north to the Antarctic regions, conquering the unknown antipodes – through extremes of climate, changing constellations, negotiating un-navigable gulfs, extending your crown, sir, almost to the South Pole. How many days have I travelled on your behalf, by land and sea? To Italy, Augusta, Flanders and England – when they asked you to be their king. From there, to serve you further, I went to the famous struggles in Peru, where so many swords were drawn against you. And when the rebellious Indians were punished and their realm brought to obedience, I passed to remote Arauco, which had shaken its neck from our yoke, but was then, with a protracted war, subjected to our odious dominion. I then went on ahead of the conquerors to the remotest lands, hitherto unseen.

In order not to tire you (and myself), I shall leave off describing the immense hardships I suffered: thirst, hunger, intensities of heat and cold, lack of adequate clothing, the mountains and big rivers I passed, the unpopulated deserts, the risks, dangers, critical moments which it would be importunate to portray. I shall not describe how the young captain was wantonly seized in the plaza to be publicly beheaded, nor the big prison where so many innocent people were confined, nor a thousand other miseries – entailing fates worse than death.

Although my willpower, never weary, will serve you today, broken hopes collapse as I see the waters ever flooding over me. At the end of a long and arduous day, I found that my weary boat had arrived – in opposition to adverse Fortune, far from its desired destination.

But though the struggle knocks me down and diverts me from my main purpose, you can see that this difficult career has finally put me on the right road. Although my misfortune urges more, the most important factor is that of having proved my worth; the real value of honours lies not just in possessing them, but in having earned them. It is cowardly discontent to stay wrapped up in my little corner of misery – this suspends my hand, holds back my pen. Here I

should make way for the massive quantity of your deeds and lofty thoughts – other talents, other voices, other accents.

Finally, I cannot go far away from my ship; the most skilful pilot cannot necessarily predict the outcome. Considering that time is short, I want to cease living before the uncertain course of life ends, after so many years of error and distraction. Although I have been tardy, and expect my hour to come soon, I know that at all times, in all places, it is never too late to turn to God whose clemency is endless; even the greatest sinners shall not be turned away. He is a benevolent God who forgets offences but not services done for him.

And I, who have with a free hand given the full details of my life, and thrown myself over a cliff when following my vain hopes, having seen the meagre fruits I have garnered, and how much I have offended God – knowing my error, it is right that from now on I lament it and do not sing in its celebration.